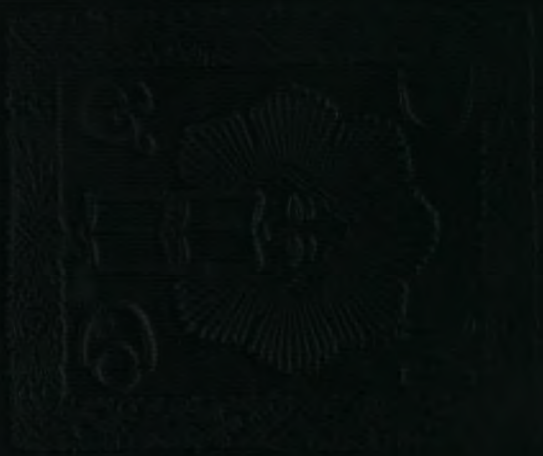

Elizabeth Sabin Ross

ACROSS EUROPE WITH SATANELLA

MRS. CLARE SHERIDAN AND OSWALD FREWEN.

[Frontispiece.

ACROSS EUROPE WITH SATANELLA

BY

CLARE SHERIDAN

WITH 45 ILLUSTRATIONS

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD & COMPANY
1925

Printed in Great Britain

To

MY BROTHER

PETER

"The sea of memory shoreward brings
the wreckage of a happy day."

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ACROSS EUROPE WITH SATANELLA

CHAPTER I

THE START

"LET'S go to Russia."

This was the suggestion I threw out to my brother Peter. He had a summer vacation and was contemplating a motor bicycle trip on the Continent.

For two years he had speeded around England, and once he had taken our aged mother in his sidecar to Paris. The idea of crossing Europe seemed rather to fall in with his love of the open road, and we spent some hours studying maps and drawing tentative lines across Holland, Germany, Czecho-Slovakia and Poland. We then submitted our nebulous plan to the A.A., who worked out details for us and gave us minute road directions "as far as Warsaw," beyond which they could supply no information.

Next we visited a camp equipment shop somewhere near Victoria, where tents and people camping and the "home fires burning" could be seen through the plate-glass window. A new world suddenly opened up. Here were tents that weighed only eleven pounds and could be rigged up anywhere in five minutes, air-beds that rolled into small brown paper parcels, and a whole paraphernalia for cooking contained in a space of a green canvas bucket.

What a way to live! No more rents, no more house-hunting, no more fixed abodes! A motor-bike and a tent, and the whole wide world in which to wander!

Our plan was to make for Prague and then go on to Warsaw; from there to Kiev, to Odessa, and thence by sea to Constantinople; and no matter about the return journey.

People asked why we did not take a motor instead of a motor sidecar. They were extraordinarily fertile in recommending makes of motor-cars. And I had to explain that—yes, we have no motor-car—no, we belong to the fraternity of vagabonds. Nobody seemed to regard our project very seriously, and the foreign editor of a great English "daily," who knew of a blot on my Russian escutcheon, said that of course I

would never get another Russian visa. This indeed was a possibility, but we decided that if the worst happened and we were refused visas into Russia, we would go to Constantinople through Hungary and the Balkans. Peter, however, who has a great belief in my power of "wangling," continued to work out the plan of the Russian roads. Maybe the Russian Embassy thought we never would get there with a motor bicycle and sidecar, and therefore they could afford to be generous. At all events they granted us the visas (with a time limit which expired on August 1st), and gave us a special letter of recommendation from Mr. Rakovsky.

The rest of the foreign visas were easily enough obtained. Germans, Poles, Turks, all vied with one another in amiability, and we were loaded with ambassadorial "laisser-passers." Only the Czecho-Slovaks refused the "laisser-passer" and heaped us with Czecho-Slovakian propaganda literature instead!

We started somewhat heavy laden, but "Satanella" was a seven horse-power A.J.S. and the sidecar (christened by its makers "Plus One"! which always gave me the feeling of being "de trop!") was especially built for lightness and recommended to us on account of the adapta-

bility of the seat, which could (when there was no luggage on the back) be adjusted to an horizontal position suitable for a stretcher. Such were our requirements according to general expectations!

What this sidecar gained over other sidecars in lightness enabled us to make up with a certain weight of luggage. We had four small fibre suitcases, that is to say a personal one each; a third, which contained kodak films, shoes, towels, soap, Keating's, thermos, maps, etc.; and a fourth, which was not to be opened unless we dined out or got ill. It contained evening clothes and a medicine chest. We thought we might need evening clothes, as we seemed to have such heaps of letters to officials in various capitals. My two dresses, of course, did not take a third of the space of my brother's stiff shirts and collars, a coat that was terribly difficult to fold, and a collapsible opera-hat.

My own luggage consisted of two coats, a skirt for the first part of the trip, breeches and boots for "beyond civilisation," two felt hats that rolled into nothing, jumpers that took no more room than a pocket-handkerchief, and several scarves to enable me to pretend I had

changed when I was tired of the dress I might happen to be wearing.

My brother said worse things about my pound and a half pot of face-cream than I ever said about his opera-hat, but I defended the pot on the grounds that it would grow lighter as each day passed.

We had, moreover, three kodaks, two writing-cases, a hatchet, an entrenching tool, and, in a holdall strapped onto the carrier, the tent, two air-beds and two blankets. Two tins specially made to hold 5 gallons each would enable us to carry sufficient petrol for 400 miles. These completed our equipment.

On Saturday, July 8, 1924, at 8 a.m., we started from home, which is in Sussex and on the Folkestone road.

My children were greatly excited over the packing and the stowing of all our luggage. Margaret, with charming delicacy, whispered to me, as I kissed her good-bye: "I shall cry to-night, Mummie!" but I appreciated the cheers that speeded our departure. An hour and a half's run, mostly through the Romney Marshes, brought us to the quayside at Folkestone. Here our machine became an object of interest to

road wanderers of our own calibre. Motor drivers were haughty and disdainful. They represented the aristocrats of the road, and we were the tramps.

There was a moment of great tension when Satanella was rolled onto a float and hoisted up into the air. For a few seconds our immediate future seemed to hang upon a slender thread.

Two Dutchmen, whose motor cycles were also dangling in mid-air for shipment to Flushing, became our temporary friends. Their road was to lead them in the evening, as ours, to Bergen-op-Zoom, and they made a rendezvous with us for the evening meal.

At Flushing we attracted our first crowd. There was hardly room to move. The Holland officials were as nice as they could be. They opened no luggage, and when once our papers were stamped and in order we departed on our way with their solemn good wishes; but one of them, hearing of our destination, said to me: "Perhaps you will change your mind about entering Russia."

"Why?" I asked.

"Because," he answered solemnly, "it is not a very pleasant place just now." He evidently took us for light-hearted trippers wandering in ignorance.

OUR FUTURE HUNG UPON A THREAD.

Putting "Satanella" on board at Folkest ne.

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By this time it was past six in the evening, and we had 40 miles to make to Bergen-op-Zoom. We started off in the lovely soft evening sunlight among the long shadows, and all the girls and boys, in national dress, seemed to be decked out for our special benefit. An enchanting picture to find only a day's journey from home!

CHAPTER II

ACROSS HOLLAND AND GERMANY

FOR English people it is extremely easy to go to Holland. No visas are required, and one does not have to put any money down for the machine. A mysterious thing called a " carnet de passage " is used instead of a triptyque. (My brother understands all this technical side.)

The country, although flat, is quite lovely. The villages are little dreams. One especially that we passed through had little painted bridges and gates over dykes on either side of the road, and the houses had painted shutters and lace curtains like dolls' houses, and all the gardens were full of orange lilies and white, as well as roses and carnations, and cherry-trees covered with fruit and pears ripening. These were not the houses of the rich but of the peasants. The women in picturesque lace caps sat outside their front doors. Some of them had real Rembrandt faces. There were no signs of poverty or distress, but of course there is no industrialism.

It looked like the triumph of ideal Socialism—that is to say, of a high level of prosperity without riches. One saw no slums and no beggars. The one-time great Republic, with far-reaching colonies, now reduced to a "little Holland," has devoted herself to putting her house in order. And she seems to have tidied it up to a superhuman degree. The whole country looks like a private property that has a superfluity of gardeners, so that nothing remains to be done. Everything is so well ordered, even the avenues arch overhead like a great cathedral nave. We had but one complaint to make: whole stretches of road are paved with small granite blocks, in the old Roman fashion, and when these are uneven the jarring and jolting that they cause to the motorist is inexpressible. Especially unendurable it was when the pouring rain streamed down my neck inside my clothes, and one felt that the granite blocks had been laid by the Romans themselves and never been touched since.

On this pavement we punctured and a small four-year-old, looking on, sang phlegmatically in Dutch: "Yes—we have no bananas."

At that moment Russia and Constantinople seemed very far off indeed, and Peter and I

wondered if we were fated to break down ignominiously in Holland! I felt desperate about our overloading, cursed my vanity, and wished I owned nothing in the world but the clothes I stood up in.

That evening, when we stopped for the second night, at a wayside inn, I unpacked my suitcase, reviewed my clothes, and made a parcel of all superfluous stockings and gloves, and sent them back home by post. It did not make the slightest difference to the weight of the car, but only to the weight of my conscience.

On Monday, July 7th, the third day after starting, we reached Glanerbrugge, the frontier between Holland and Germany. It is a small wayside place and the officials had nothing much to do. The Dutch signed some papers and released us amiably. We felt sorry to leave their charming, friendly country, but we were terribly relieved to have crossed the first of the many frontiers that lay upon our route. For the edification of the German officials I produced a special letter of recommendation from the German Embassy in London. Each official read it in turn, and then proceeded to open every piece of luggage that we carried. It is true they did so with much civility, but I could not help wondering

how we would have fared if there had been no Embassy letter.

Several of the frontier guards had been prisoners of war in England, and I said to one of them that I thought it was about time Europe settled down peacefully on friendly terms with each and every neighbour. He looked back at me rather significantly and answered quickly: "No—the time has not yet come."

At two o'clock in the afternoon, having wasted not more than an hour at the frontier, we got away over perfectly good roads and made for Münster. All the while we were crossing Westphalia the people looked sour and sullen. We realised how near we were to the occupied area and that the Westphalians were feeling raw and sore. It was very depressing after the happy faces of Holland. At Münster, which is rather a picturesque old town, the great big hotel Furstenhof was quite deserted. A young waiter—belonging to that new generation that has matured since the war—informed us that there were no foreigners in Germany because Germany had become too expensive, and then, with a tinge of arrogance, he added: "But we do not want them, we are getting on very well."

After Münster, where we spent the night, the

character of the country changed, and we got away from Westphalia and followed the admirable directions of the A.A., which were completely foolproof, and which led us from village to village on our slanting, cross-country journey towards the nearest point of the Czecho-Slovakian frontier.

We left a dull drizzle behind us, the weather became heavenly and the machine ran like an angel. The country too grew more and more lovely: long, straight, wide stretches of road bordered with whitewashed-stemmed fruit-trees across the open plain. Cornfields full of poppies and cornflowers. Here and there delicious old timbered black and white villages, then more stretches of open rolling plain, with sudden plunges into black forest depths, emerging once more among avenues of heavenly smelling lime-trees.

Peter seemed to have caught the " wanderlust " badly. He drove madly on and on like one pursued by furies. When I asked him to stop so that I could take a photograph, he answered: " No, no, that will delay us ten minutes." Ten minutes' delay in arriving where—at Constantinople? (Useless to argue with one's brother.) Suddenly in the midday heat he would stop abruptly, throw himself down on

the grass by the roadside, roll, stretch, hold his head (which, like mine, must have been humming), and then spring into the saddle again, saying we must hurry, hurry! Of course he was right to waste no time in Germany, when so much of interest lay beyond, but the pace he set was almost beyond our strength.

Our second German evening we stopped in a village called Helsa, and inquired for rooms at a pleasant-looking inn called the "König Von Preussen." (After our Münster experience of an hotel that required six gold marks each per night and had innumerable waiters and hallboys to tip, we determined either to camp or to stay at small roadside inns.) At the end of an 115-mile day the "König Von Preussen" looked inviting. Very clean and very comfortable it proved, romantic even, but not restful. An orgy of drunken noise which lasted far into the morning, singing "Yes—we have no bananas," rendered sleep impossible. "A party from Berlin!" the patron told us in the morning. They certainly made the night hideous. Moreover, the fluffy feather-bed coverings that the Germans use in summer and winter alike were stiflingly hot, but without them one was too cold. The cost of

the inn, however, was exactly half that of the Münster hotel.

After another day of speeding we determined to have a really peaceful night for once and not pay German prices for it. Accordingly we bought some food in a village, preparatory to a night's camping. The bread, sardines, Swiss cheese and French wine, however, cost ten gold marks, whereas our supper at the " König Von Preussen " cost only six. While we were in the store a crowd collected around Satanella outside. The storekeeper asked me where we had come from, and where we were going. When I told him that we had come from England and were on our way to Russia he went out onto the doorstep and surveyed the machine, and then returned phlegmatically to his counter and asked : " Why don't you go by train ? "

Beyond the village we turned up past a corn-field to the outskirts of a fir-wood on high ground about a hundred yards from the road. The view was superb for miles and miles before us, and the evening sun made long shadows among the profuse wild flowers. Here we pitched our tent, out of view, and ate our supper. At nightfall I turned in to bed beneath the tent. Peter preferred to sleep just outside.

For a long while I lay awake imagining that I heard footsteps. After a fitful sleep I was awakened at one o'clock by the uncanny stillness. There was not a sound, either of night bird, of insect or of wind. Even the distant barking of a dog had ceased. At two o'clock a lark began to sing. It was not even light. At three o'clock Peter asked humbly to be admitted to the tent. At 5.30 I shiveringly asked Peter for brandy; he lighted the lamp to make some tea and we ate the remains of our supper for breakfast. When Peter began to dress he discovered his clothes were damp. He had left them hanging on the fir-tree peg all night, forgetting the dew.

It took us from six o'clock till ten to pack up everything and get away. Our camp looked as if ten gipsies had lived there for a week. We blinked sleepily at one another's unwashed faces and agreed it had been jolly!

CHAPTER III

TO PRAGUE

Our last day in Germany proved the best. We got into Bavaria, where the roads were quite magnificent. After some terrific hills, which made my heart stop beating with anxiety, but which Satanella negotiated magnificently, we proceeded along miles and miles of road that was gravelled like a private park. There were no hedges or ditches or banks on either side, just an avenue of silver birch-trees and then open, waving grazing land to the mountains. The road was almost deserted except for an occasional ox wagon and some lethargic peasants.

At about five o'clock on July 9th we reached the frontier. There was no barrier or anything to indicate it, except in a village street the familiar words "Zoll-amt." It did not take long to get our triptyque signed. (There is never any difficulty about leaving a country, the people always seem so glad to see one go.) A little farther and a lonely house by the roadside

marked the beginning of Czecho-Slovakia. These were the only other people besides the Dutch for whom we were not armed with a special ambassadorial letter of recommendation, but, like the Dutch, the Czecho-Slovaks did not open our luggage. It only required a little patience while they inspected triptyque documents and the car and all its marks, and in fact gave themselves a great deal more trouble than they gave us.

As we were dead tired we decided to go no farther into the new country than Eger, 7 miles away.

That Peter should be tired was a matter of great satisfaction to me. I asked him (tentatively, of course, for when a man is tired one must not press him for statements) if his idea of "the trip," of which two months and three weeks still lie before us, was to "speed" as we had speeded across Holland and Germany. He answered that Holland and Germany stood in our way and were merely space to be covered in order to get on to our ground. He agreed reassuringly to a slowing down process now that we had reached Czecho-Slovakia.

From this moment on we began to feel a greater confidence in the success of our enterprise. If the machine had managed to get so far

with our load there seemed to be every reason why she should go farther.

We spent one more night on the road to Prague, most of the way being across what used to be German Bohemia. The villages had perfectly good, clean inns, for which one was very thankful. One may like or dislike the Germans, but wherever their influence penetrates there one finds comfort and cleanliness. The people in the inn at which we stayed said that 96 per cent. of the village inhabitants were German, and that if self-determination were worth more than words, they would be under German jurisdiction instead of Czecho-Slovakian.

In many of the villages one saw in shop windows, or else painted crudely in black and white over doorways, the portraits side by side of President Masaryk and President Wilson. A certain American atmosphere had penetrated. Maybe through American sewing machines or "movies." At all events there was no suspicion of English influence, and one felt that for Czecho-Slovakia the British Empire was non-existent. In other countries, France, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Bulgaria, etc., England certainly means something, but to Czecho-Slovakia it would not have seemed to be a matter for comment if

WAR MEMORIAL IN A SMALL VILLAGE IN CZECHO-SLOVAKIA.

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England had been suddenly sunken under the sea. Perhaps the reason for this is their inland position.

The German Bohemian atmosphere (and with it the German Bohemian complaints) lasted until about 30 kilometres from Prague. After that one really found oneself in the middle of a new country and unable to understand a word of the language. The roads were certainly not good, but neither were they as bad as the worst roads that we had encountered in Holland and Germany. The scenery was dreary, but its monotony was cheered by the avenues of trees along the road that were drooping with ripe cherries. A great deal of trouble was being taken over the main roads, and we were deviated twice for long distances because of repairs.

In a small village, a war memorial carved in stone caused us to stop, for it had considerable artistic merit. Instead of the usual soldier figures, this memorial represented the desolate women and children. In composition and technique it betrayed considerable Slav influence. A remarkable monument for so small a place, but the names it commemorated ran into a triple column. These were the soldiers who died fighting for the Austrian Empire from which

the country has since broken away and which is now their enemy. Eventually we reached Prague. Through (literally through) the archways and courtyards of the great Castle of Hradcany, past the dominating Cathedral of St. Vitus, with its towering spires, and over the famous Charles IVth bridge, with its carved stone saints that spans the River Vltava. And so into the modern town. The ancient capital of the kingdom of Bohemia is now the capital of a new post-war Republican State. But it does not feel modern, it does not feel republican, it does not suggest anything post-war. Centuries have contrived to produce its silhouette, which is in every way so perfect that almost it would seem to be in itself a monument, the details having inadvertently contributed to such a perfect whole. Only Catholicism seemed to have rather overdone itself. At every turn in every street one was reminded that Christ died for us, and the abounding Renaissance saints, with their flowing robes and their eyes turned sentimentally heavenwards, created in me a reaction against saintliness; but these were merely trifling details. The new Czecho-Slovakian postage stamps depict the "Irridenta" spirit of the Czech lady liberated, her chains broken, her arms free!

THE "CHARLES" BRIDGE AT PRAGUE.

THE CHURCH OF ST. VITUS, PRAGUE.

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Prague of to-day, the capital of a liberated people, has an intense desire to obliterate the German language. Austria is remembered with bitterness. The people would rather talk French or English than German. Unfortunately they talk Czech! It is like the Irish with their Gaelic; no one understands it but themselves, and it is not worth while to learn it. If one asked a policeman a direction in German he affected not to understand. If one asked the same question in French, it met with an embarrassed smile, and then if one followed this up by explaining: "We are English—Inglesi, Anglais, Englische"—he would invariably expand into a friendly grin, and consent to hark back to the German tongue, which, of course, he understood all the while perfectly. So it became a little comedy, this asking of the way, first in French, then in English, and finally in German, but if we started off asking first in German we always met a blank.

The motor etiquette of Prague amused us. It is customary to sound one's horn twice when sighting a policeman, and thus catch his eye. One then throws one's hand right, left or forward in the direction one means to go. He then waves his truncheon all round the horizon till he brings it parallel to one's intended direction, and his

spare arm twice round the horizon to stop everything else. As the police are every ten yards and usually in couples the effect is at first disconcerting to a stranger. With the exception of this comic performance, and the terrible seriousness with which 800,000 souls are unlearning German, Prague is a very lovely city indeed. It ranks for beauty in the first class.

CHAPTER IV

VIA SILESIA TO POLAND

OUR arrival in Prague coincided with a Little Entente Conference. Huge Roumanian flags hung alongside the Czecho-Slovakian flag from the Government buildings. The nervousness of Roumania penetrated into this European interior. Roumania, as everybody knows, took Bessarabia from Russia and Transylvania from Hungary at a moment when each of these countries was engaged in internal conflict; but as each grows stronger and more stable, Roumania's nervous tension increases. Russia they still affect to regard with contempt as being weak, but they admit Russia's future. Hungary at the moment seemed to be the greater anxiety of the two. Hungary appeared to be recovering. The Hungarian loan floated recently in London had been alarmingly over subscribed. Roumania was looking towards Czecho-Slovakia for support. But the Czechs themselves seemed none too confident about their own Slovak combination. The Slovaks

resent the Czechs almost as much as the Czechs once resented the Austrians, and so although the Little Entente makes a big noise, shouts and proclaims itself, it is really rather like the wooden soldiers who at the end of the tune all tumble backwards and forwards upon one another in varying leaning attitudes.

From Prague we were obliged to cross Silesia in order to get to Warsaw. It was rather an anti-climax to re-enter Germany, but after the dull flatness of Czecho-Slovakia, one appreciated the beauty of Silesia with its hills and forests. The Germans in Silesia were amiable; so much so that one realised how impossible it is to generalise about Germans. The Westphalians are grim, the mid-Germans are charming, the Bavarians are coldly civil, the Prussians are damnable, and so on.

As we sat by the roadside eating our sandwiches, having first of all cleared the ground of wild strawberries before spreading the rug, three small children stopped and looked at the machine. The boy was about the same age as mine, obviously a war baby. He asked us where we came from. I told him we were from England.

"Where's that?" he asked.

"It's a long way off," I answered.

"Is it a town?"

"No—it is not a town, and it is not in Germany!" And I advised him to consult his schoolmaster as to where exactly on the map is London, England.

"Have you ever heard of Paris?" I asked. The boy shook his head, but the little girl nodded; she had heard of Paris! Finally I told them we were going to "Russland," whereupon the boy's face was suffused with an expression of complete comprehension—he answered: "Ja, so-o-o!" Doubtless his father fought upon the Eastern front. Russia to them is a reality, the Western front a mere myth.

We stopped a night at a place called Nimptsch and the next morning started on again for Breslau, but suddenly remembering some old friends living in a medieval Schloss in the neighbourhood, we stopped a push-bicyclist and asked: "Where do Prince and Princess Blücher live?" He knew all about it. "The Princess is 'zu haus,' but the Prince is away," he informed us, and directed us through seven villages to the Castle of Kriblowitz. As this only entailed 9 miles of détour, we turned aside and presented ourselves with a smile at the luncheon hour. Nine hundred miles to lunch was too much for our

hosts, and we stayed, without over much persuasion, to tea, to dinner, and to sleep. The Prince returned in the evening from killing buck, and was naturally surprised. Even more surprised when he heard that we were bound for Russia. He was passionately anti-Bolshevik. Apparently there were something like forty-six reputed Communists in their village, with a population of about one hundred and sixty. A policeman had recently been shot, and the Prince's ice-cave had been raided and one hundred head of game removed. (O Communism! What atrocities are not committed in thy name!) We heard a good deal about the terrible fate that awaited us in Russia. The Prince revelled in details of tortures and watched our faces. It was, however, a great delight to be in this semi-English house, and one appreciated above all things good bed linen. I watched my hostess serenely embroidering an altar-cloth on a shady terrace overlooking a lake, and a provoking spirit within me urged the advantages of home and peace.

The next day we made an early start, pushed on through Breslau, and in the pouring rain at three o'clock in the afternoon we reached the Polish frontier. The German official faces were

in keeping with the weather. In spite of our German Embassy letter of recommendation, we were obliged to unload all we had, and were inspected even unto our note-books, as if we were the most suspected spies. In answer to my inquiry as to the object of an Embassy letter, I was informed gruffly that it was of no use whatever! This incivility spoiled the general good impression that Germany had made upon us. We cursed them in English, and observed in broken German that we were glad to be going into the country of our friends the Poles. Finally we pushed on, leaving nothing behind us but our tempers. The Poles indeed were slow but friendly, and did much to restore our good-humour. The only delay was due to the illiteracy of a clerk who could not read our documents and was ashamed to admit it. The sentry was a lighthearted fellow who had served in the German Army in the war. Since then the Treaty of Versailles had placed his native village in Poland, and so he served in the army of his late enemies, but what did he care? Life in the German Army had been hard; the rations, he said, were inadequate. He wished us a "Happy journey" ("Glückliche Reise") and we went on our way. But the evening was foul,

and torrents of rain damped our spirits. At the town of Kempen, near by, we decided to stop for the night. Kempen was a German town before the war, and we concluded therefore that it must be better to sleep in than the Polish villages. In this, however, we were completely mistaken. We met the most disagreeable people and the most sullen that we had yet encountered on our whole trip. They were rude, the inn was dirty, and because the town had neither electric light nor gas and the hotel supplied neither lamps nor candles, we were obliged to go to bed with the sun. This in itself was not a hardship, for we were tired, but the companions of the night made sleep restless and the hours long. I tied myself up in my mosquito net bag, and although I was bitten through the net (not by mosquitoes), at least I had the satisfaction of feeling that they could not crawl all over me.

Were these people Poles when Kempen was Germany? Did all the names over all the shops in the square always end in "sky"? or were these people Germans who had been "Polonised"? Is German orderliness less an instinctive trait and more a matter of discipline inflicted by a system of severe domination? How perplexing it all is.

The discomforts of Kempen enabled us the next day to make an early start. The weather had mended and our spirits revived. We were fearfully excited at being at last in Poland. As we loaded up our luggage onto the machine a crowd as usual gathered around us, and someone asked me if we were on a honeymoon trip! We were much surprised, for we certainly didn't feel remotely like it.

After a few miles the road became worse than anything we had known. Peter had seen the same kind of road in Canada, made with logs placed side by side, a system called "corduroy." It may be endurable when the logs are placed fairly evenly and close together, but in this case there were great gaps where some had rotted away. I really began to be apprehensive of ever reaching Russia. Much of this would surely break up the machine. After a while Peter asked me if I could bear it any longer. My fingers were numbed from holding on. I was not conscious of holding on until he spoke, and of course I had made up my mind that once over the Polish frontier I could stand anything!

We crawled on, at 5 miles an hour, for what seemed an eternity. Later in the day the road varied from good to bad in patches. We passed

a few German war graves, with big stone crosses, but all overgrown with brambles. There were of course none to commemorate the names of those millions who fought in the Russian Imperial Army for the Allied cause. Instead there were shrines innumerable, full of faded wax figures, or high gaunt crucifixes with miniature spear, ladder, pincers and nails, hanging therefrom, that lent an air of desolation.

The farther we went along the road the more Russian it seemed to become. The houses were built of wood logs dovetailed at the corners in the way that Russian houses are built. The road was enormously wide, evidently built for strategic purposes. On such a road one managed somehow to find a more or less passable place, and the horses that were terrified by the sound of our machine were able to dance and prance at their ease without going into the ditch or into us. In all the villages there were conspicuous numbers of Jews. They dressed distinctively. Their small black caps, long black coats and high Russian boots rendered them striking to the eye amid the rest of the population. There were astounding quantities of them.

Twelve miles from Lodz the road was of rough cobblestones, which lasted the whole of the 12

miles, so uneven that one's head shook like a sort of Chinese nodding figure. In a state of almost gibbering exhaustion we reached Lodz, and as we stopped before the hotel a crowd collected. The tramcar was held up, and a hectic policeman went back and forth trying to disperse the people and failing absolutely. I hate a crowd and made a bolt for the inside of the hotel.

Before I had time to collect my scattered wits the hotel porter asked for my passport and for the name of my father. Nor was this enough; he must know the name of my mother also, to report it to the police. In my bewilderment I replied that my mother's name was the same as my father's. They said it was my mother's maiden name they had to know. Suddenly the floodgates of my eloquence were broken. What the —— had it to do with the people of Lodz whether my parents were black or white! The hotel authorities looked at me in surprise and dismay and hurriedly led me to my room.

CHAPTER V

TO WARSAW

On the road to Warsaw the machine, with almost super-tact, punctured on a Sunday morning just outside a village church. The peasants in their national costumes were on their way to Mass. Peter, hemmed in by an almost impenetrable crowd of boys and men who hardly gave him breathing space, launched violent imprecations. In vain I called him to come and look at the lovely people, but his cursing merely grew louder. The women did not stop to look at us, but passed on with an air of superior dignity. Tied under their chins they had shawls that were lemon-coloured, bordered with red flowers. Their skirts were woven in stripes of blue, green, red, black, magenta and orange; their white linen blouses were wide-sleeved and richly embroidered. Round their necks strings of corals and rows of pearl beads. Many of them carried bunches of marigolds as altar offerings. The little baby girls were dressed like their mothers and were quite

unself-conscious. Never have I seen anything more exquisitely enchanting. They all congregated on the grass outside the church and kneeled to pray around a high crucifix. The sun shone down upon their myriad colours, one would have imagined a dream garden full of giant flowers. Farther up the road, a little girl dressed thus marvellously stood in a garden of sunflowers against a cottage wall painted Reckitt's blue!

But for this brilliant scene, and perhaps one or two outstanding patches of scenery, my mind is a kaleidoscopic welter. It is obvious that no human memory can retain what might almost be described as a thousand miles of movie pictures. When I look at some of my snapshots of German villages which were developed at Prague, I declare that never in my life have I seen the places I have photographed. I do, however, retain an unpleasant memory of crowds! Whenever and wherever we stopped, instantly there gathered a crowd. I hated going through towns, for even if we did not stop we were obliged to go dead slow over the cobblestone streets. There is nothing more ridiculous than to sit in a sidecar and be shaken like a pea in a pod while people smile as one goes slowly by. Worse than the smiles of the adults, however, were the loud

laughter and the shouts of the insolent youths of these towns. They would run alongside pointing a finger of fun at the empty space beneath me, from which it seemed to them a fourth wheel was missing. How they did laugh at the missing fourth wheel! I never understood why they thought it was so comic.

Peter was so intent upon his driving that he did not experience any of my sensations and he scoffed at what he called my "self-consciousness."

It was finally with great weariness, but with a sense of proud accomplishment, that we arrived at the Europaisje Hotel in Warsaw. We were given two exceedingly inferior "cheap" rooms at 8s. each, plus an 80 per cent. tax, and when we protested we were told haughtily that these were cheap. We felt if this was the frying-pan we might as well push right on into the Russian fire at once! In reply to my telephone call, however, the British Legation responded by an invitation to stay then and there for as long as we liked. The haughtiness went out of the Europaisje like air from a punctured tyre. In the absence of a Polish King, the British Minister seemed to carry the greatest prestige of any individual in Warsaw. We laughed at the grovellings of the hotel and left immediately,

THE RUSSIAN CHURCH BEING DEMOLISHED BY THE POLES AT WARSAW.

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to revel in the luxury of a real English well-appointed comfortable home, the last days of comfort for many weeks to come!

Warsaw as a city is the greatest disappointment. It has no character or individuality. The only edifice of any beauty or monumental value was the great cupola'd Russian Cathedral. We noticed that something was being done to the roof when we arrived. The next day we discovered they were pulling it down. The Mohammedan Turk adapted Christian St. Sofia to his own religion, and the Spaniard preserved the Moorish Alhambra, but the Pole, in the twentieth century, tears down the only piece of architecture in his capital, because, he explains, it stands on the spot where Napoleon once reviewed troops. (Napoleon came here, as elsewhere, and is the local hero!)

The truth is that Russian domination is still too recent in Polish memory, and the Russian Church is a constant reminder of the hated Imperial oppression.

Outside the town I was shown the famous forts, built, as a Russian Czar proclaimed, "not to protect Warsaw, but to destroy it" in case of insurrection.

Poland to-day is really the pivotal point of the Treaty of Versailles. Almost upon Poland's frontiers depends the peace of Europe. Her strategical and geographical position is hideously unenviable. Russia and Prussia are her great menace on two sides. At present the Poles speak of Russia with the same levity as do the Roumanians. The big bear is sick, and the bear weak with sickness seems to them an object of contempt. But Prussia—how they fear, how they detest Prussia!

Whether the Poles have through generations of foreign domination been bereft of the power of self-organisation is not yet entirely certain. They are making a valiant effort to unite themselves into a nation, but according to one of them: "suddenly, the war over, we found ourselves alone—Russia had left us, Prussia had walked out and Austria had ceased to be." These three great Powers who had partitioned her among themselves had seen to it that she should be as completely demoralised, ignorant, inefficient and irresponsible as their dominating tyranny could make her. It is not easy for a people suddenly to alter their whole attitude of mind. For decades it was patriotism for the Poles to evade paying taxes. The policeman was the common enemy

against whom even the thief in their midst had to be protected. To-day they are learning to regard the policeman as existing for their special benefit and protection. The taxes must be paid if the State is to thrive. The Pole must work, must compete, must establish his existence among the new nations. It will require all their combined efforts to maintain themselves. The prevailing impression left on my mind is their blind, undeviating hatred of Russia. Everyone was aghast at our project of going into the Ukraine. In fact so many people told us of their experience in being condemned to death by the Bolsheviks, that one began to suspect the Bolsheviks of unparalleled mercy! We were assured there was famine, that bands of brigands would rob us, that unless we were on friendly terms with the Soviet officials we would not get very far, and that if the officials protected us the peasants would hate us. In fact certain death awaited us everywhere! Some who were kind let us off with an imaginary throat-cutting, others killed us with sticks, the blood-thirstiest with boiling water by slow stages. Peter, who seemed to be regarded as a lunatic or a criminal for daring to attempt to take his sister into such a situation, explained as best he could that his sister had

got " the call of Russia," as others get " the call of the wild " or of the desert, and that she wouldn't be deterred !

The necessity of carrying firearms was then urged upon us. The British Minister and Lady Max Müller assured us that they never went motoring even in Poland without each being armed, as well as the chauffeur. Finally we consulted the Russian Soviet representative, whom none of the other diplomatic representatives affected to know.

The Soviet official smiled quite unconcernedly. He admitted that there were bands (not bandits. This is a very subtle distinction. A marauding " political band " is not in the same category as a criminal bandit, even though their methods may be the same !) The Russian claimed that the " bands " were in Poland. The Poles, whilst admitting that the bands might be in Poland, insisted that they were bands of Russians. " But," said the Soviet official, " our latest report is that they have moved northward." Nevertheless he thought it might add to our prestige if we were armed, and so he gave us a special permit to carry revolvers into Russia. Altogether he was extremely amiable. He even wired to the frontier to tell them to expect us. After this

we elicited the sympathy of a Polish ex-Minister for Foreign Affairs (the place is full of them—they change every few weeks), who took us to a shop and lent us his own permit to buy firearms. It was all very exciting. Peter bought a big one, and I bought a little one. Of course I never would use it, not if all the bandits in Christendom surrounded me. Peter was advised solemnly never to fire if there are more than four assailants, but to trust to chaff and light persiflage in the presence of large numbers!

CHAPTER VI

WARSAW TO THE RUSSIAN FRONTIER

FOUR days' recuperation at the British Legation and we were ready again for the road. That last morning I arose very reluctantly from my bed. I hugged my pillow and buried my face in it and murmured blessings upon British hospitality.

We knew that Warsaw was the last outpost of civilisation. A large crowd assembled outside the courtyard gates while we loaded up the machine, and our departure was quite spectacular. We felt like royalties, but missed the cheering! We had been told that the road was "good" to Brest-Litovsk. It took us three and a half hours to do the first 39 miles, and then we stopped to rest by some German war graves, that stood on a knoll, silhouetted against the sky. The graves were arranged in a neat circle of thirty-one, their feet inwards towards a stone shrine that held a little statue of St. Michael. On a boulder below was engraved the terse

inscription: "16 Russen." It really was so beautiful and so peaceful and the graves were overgrown with such a variety of wild flowers that it made one almost in love with death. Here indeed Byron might have soliloquised, although Shelley probably would have done it better. The background was a Shelley poem, and he would have added everything that is to the point concerning war and tyranny and the futility of heroism.

We only did 55 miles that day, and slept at Syedlets, a small Jewish town with a primitive hotel where the rooms cost 3s. a night each and a very ordinary supper cost 19s. In the morning we found that 100 per cent. tax had been added to our bill. This was too much. Peter protested. I would have meekly paid it for peace sake, but Peter was up in arms in indignation at this new form of "foreign exploitation" (it came on top of a long list of endurances). It was explained to us by the hotel keeper that the town was run by the Jews, and that they had their own local legislature and there was nothing to be done about it. Peter refused to pay and set out to look for the "magistrat," and expressed to him all his pent-up indignation in English, French and German, none of which languages

could the "magistrat" understand. The net result, however, was that the tax, which the hotel keeper had paid for us, was returned.

After this delay we started off in the drizzling rain, feeling rather depressed and cold, and just outside the town, as we overtook a farm cart, the horse plunged and bolted. The peasant stupidly jumped from the cart, got caught up in the reins and was dragged at least a quarter of a mile. Had he disentangled himself the cart must have gone over him. Some peasants tried to stop the horse and a woman ran at it with a pitchfolk, which merely accelerated the horse's speed. Not until the cart itself broke in two did the horse stop. I quite expected to see the man carried away unconscious. To my amazement, however, he calmly set to work to mend his cart; he was not even shaken and had not suffered a scratch. The sleeve of his thickly padded coat was merely torn. Nor had he a thought for himself, until a bright spirit in the crowd advised him to demand compensation! He was the typical Russian peasant, tough, without nerves, whom it takes much to kill! After this we drove exceedingly warily, stopping dead at the slightest sign of a restive horse.

The road from Syedlets to Brest-Litovsk was

the best we had encountered since leaving Bavaria. It was in fact made by the Germans in the war, and is almost perfect! I observed to Peter: "How easy it is to go to Russia!" Suddenly Peter made a swerve with the machine and accelerated to full speed. I asked him what was the matter? "Nothing," he said, "I only want to see how quickly the machine can pick up if bandits come out of the wood and fire at us from behind." The machine responded so readily that we were filled with confidence, but what would happen if the bandits fired at us from in front we did not decide.

The weather as we went north towards Brest-Litovsk was hateful. An icy wind blew across the open spaces, and the silver birch-trees that avenued the road were all drooping and their branches looked like tattered feathers.

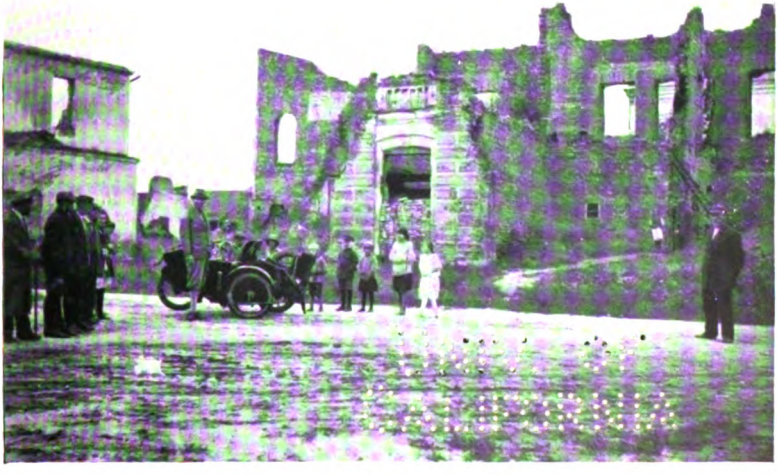
As we sat by the roadside eating our sandwiches, of a sudden from nowhere a man appeared wearing Russian boots and a fur-collared coat. He stood like a dummy with his eyes fixed on the machine. I went up to him and touched him on the shoulder. "Are you 'Polski' or 'Russki'?" Without looking up, he answered: "Polski-Russki!" I then produced my best Russian words, learnt out of a book all by myself. He did not answer.

I asked him if he understood me, and all he said was: "Nichevo ponimayou." In other words: "It doesn't matter about understanding." He evidently desired not to be disturbed by futile talk, but to be left in peace to contemplate the machine, which he continued to do until we had finished our lunch.

The peasants we met all along our road became more and more typically Russian. They looked like pictures in a story-book. The men had Buster Brown coiffures, long white wool coats tied tound the waist with a red sash, and grass woven moccasins. The children were enchanting, the boys with their high wool caps and the little girls wrapped in shawls and wearing long skirts and looking so very mature. Some of the older men took off their hats to us as we passed, and made the most courteous bows. Doubtless their manners represented the last remains of Imperial Feudalism. One had an impression of people who had been overlooked, forgotten, unnoticed, in the great reshuffling of post-war Europe.

The Imperial system had ceased to be, Poland had imposed nothing, and the modernism of Soviet Russia could not touch them. A land that had been left high and dry by a suddenly receding sea. The old people preserved their

A ROADSIDE REST.



BREST-LITOVSK: A CITY OF RUINS.

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feudal attitude of manner, and they had taught it to their children. There was no taint of modernism about them.

It was pouring with rain when we eventually arrived at Brest-Litovsk, a city of ruins. I shall never forget the sense of desolation that we felt as we bumped dismally over the muddy cobblestone road, and wondered among which group of ruins we should lay our heads.

A great, wide avenue of trees down the main steet is the Russian town plan. Nothing much seemed left here except the trees, and they were dankly dripping as if in an autumn mist.

A curious type of International took pity on our strangeness, and showed us the way to the only hotel in the town. He affected to speak English with an American intonation. He wore his cap rakishly on one eye, and his hands were thrust in his trouser pockets with a kind of apache "devil-may-care" attitude. He was one of those Americanisations who had learnt a certain standard of living, and that a collar and tie is a step higher in social evolution than a Russia blouse with a belt, and whose vocabulary after ten years in Chicago was barely sufficient for sustained conversation. He cursed himself for having ever returned home, and being completely unfitted

for the world to which he originally belonged, was finding it increasingly hard to eke out an existence. When I asked if he were a Pole or a Russian, he answered, "No, I am a Jew." All the Jews in Poland answer in the same way. I wonder if they were forbidden by Imperial Russia to claim nationality.

Meanwhile, half the population of every Polish town was Jewish, and their number was all the more conspicuous because of their dress. Their neat black caps and patriarchal gowns give them a look of great distinction. To all appearances they are much better off then the natives.

Up to Brest-Litovsk one was very evidently in Poland, which of course is very fanatically Catholic and trying to destroy every vestige of the Orthodox Faith, which is disliked with intensity because it is not only a schism but also Russianism.

At Brest-Litovsk, however, one found for the first time an untouched Russian Church. This historical fortress town, once the frontier junction of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, has nothing Polish about it to-day except the soldiers in it. Brest-Litovsk was devastated first by the Germans, then by the Russians and finally by the Poles. One recalls that here the Peace Treaty was signed between the Bolshevik Russians and the Germans,

on the occasion when Trotski made the famous remark: "This is neither peace nor war," and he wrote it on the wall of the Treaty Chamber. With the help of our hotel keeper (a Jewish doctor), we got a permit to enter the great Imperial fortress where the Peace Treaty took place. It was self-contained as a village, full of little houses and grim barracks, and there were grassy enclosures in which flocks were grazing. It was Sunday morning, and everyone seemed rather sleepy and did not take much notice of us. We asked for and were directed to the big building in which the Treaty was signed, but the building with its sentinel cannon on either side of the door seemed quite deserted. I wanted to find Trotski's writing on the wall, but I could not find the room. Finally I opened a door and found a soldier in bed. He told me in indifferent German to go up to the top of the stairs, where I would find a sentry. Peter was already up there, and had roused the sleeping sentry, who, half dressed and blinking in the morning light, was pointing out a whitewashed smudged spot on the wall. As the soldier could only speak Polish, all explanation was futile. He tried to explain something to us by signs and gesticulations, but it was all in vain. Either he was telling us that the Russians had

removed Trotski's writing, plaster and all, and framed it for a souvenir, or the Poles had whitewashed it for ever from view. We shall never know, but I suppose the latter is the more likely.

Just as we were leaving, the soldier in the downstair room angrily put his head out and, seeing our kodaks, said that it was severely forbidden to take any photographs of the fortress. I replied that we had not done any and we beat a hasty retreat. As a matter of fact, we had done several, but they did not seem very interesting until we learnt they were forbidden!

We found another great fortress just outside the town when we left. It was in a lonely spot, and had been blown up. We wandered all over it, climbing among the ruins of the most modern of concrete defences. We learnt afterwards that the Grand Duke Nicholas had ordered its destruction when he was forced to retreat before the advancing Germans. Peter was so tremendously interested I could hardly drag him away. To me it seemed full of horrible and terrifying phantoms, and a stillness that was uncanny.

Our first misadventure occurred the day we left Brest. We had got back onto the road a little way beyond the "phantom fortress" when

WITHIN THE FORTRESS, THE BUILDING IN WHICH THE PEACE OF BREST-LITOVSK WAS SIGNED.

PETER AND "SATANELLA" ON A POLISH ROAD!

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Satanella made a most unholy noise, and for a moment I imagined that all her inside had fallen out. What really had happened was that the bottom had dropped out of the sidecar, strewing the road with various camp implements, but worst of all the 2-gallon tin of oil had fallen heavily, and the oil was leaking onto the road. Peter said it was special oil that he had brought from England to lubricate the machine across Russia, and that none other would do. Every moment the sticky stream grew larger. We felt we must save it, or what we could of it, at any price. Accordingly we filled up the tank, and then the thermos! We had a bottle of beer for our midday rest; we hastily drank the beer and filled the bottle! Finally after some readjustments we were able to go on.

The road was very good; it was the road the Germans built right across Poland to the Ukraine, with a view no doubt to consolidating their gains. Unfortunately the bridges that the Germans built had been destroyed and replaced by wooden so-called "temporary" substitutes (the road was really a causeway across the famous Pripet Marsh). Going over one of them at a speed that the quality of the road justified, we shot up into the air and the sidecar's chassis snapped. We stopped in

the middle of a village and discussed whether we should seek out the blacksmith, or risk going on slowly 30 miles to the next town. A crowd collected, a crowd of real Russian peasants dressed in their embroidered shirts and white wool coats. The Jews talked to us in bad German, which is Yiddish. Suddenly someone said a few words in English. I looked round and discovered that the speaker was a smiling, blue-eyed, long-haired peasant. "Where did you learn English?" I asked. His face lit up: "I spent eight years in the States! Mostly in Boston." All his fellow-villagers looked at him in astonishment, understanding not one word and realising for the first time the distinction of the brother in their midst. He told us all about Kovel, the next town, the distance, the quality of the road, etc., and Peter decided to try and push on. I shall always regret that we did not delay in that village and ask the Americanised peasant for the hospitality of his barn. Those are the things that one thinks of too late. Eventually we reached Kovel by going about 7 miles an hour all the way.

Kovel turned out to be a horrid place which rhymes more nearly with hovel than anything else, and had also other points of resemblance. We put up at the "Bristol"—the most noisome

hotel we had yet been in—and the next day Peter found a mill machinery repairer, who had spent eight years in Detroit and spoke a little American, to "fix us" with a new solid iron rod. He got on with the task far better than we expected, and released us the same day towards 4 p.m., charging only £2 5s. for the job.

The Kovel "Bristol" was too foul to be endured for another night, and accordingly we set out, late as it was, for Lutsk, 44 miles away, where another "Bristol" was said to be much better. The road, however, was perfectly awful the whole way, so we were obliged to go dead slow. Moreover, it poured with rain, and we had dismantled the sidecar of its "lid" at Warsaw. My only protection was a waterproof sheet, which held the rain in a dozen little ponds, until releasing them in streamlets into the sidecar. A pool accumulated in my lap, and the rain ran down the inside of my mackintosh, and out through my elbows. All alongside for miles were the grim remains of the blown-up German defences, full of caverns and holes, which in the half light looked as if they might harbour evil-doers or evil spirits. Finally a thunderstorm overtook us and the night became inky black! I gripped my loaded revolver, and we

jolted and heaved and bumped along the road straining our eyes for the lights of a town. Finally we reached it, and with infinite pains we discovered in the ill-lit street the Hotel Bristol that had been recommended to us. A gentleman in evening clothes (the proprietor) raised our hopes as to the standard of the hotel. In the security of that pleated shirt and a "smoking" jacket we did not think it necessary to go in and look at the rooms, but just unloaded the bike and sent all the luggage up, and followed after it three flights. What rooms! What beds! I had seen something of the sort in the poorer quarters of German industrial towns when I "visited" with the district nurse. I heard Peter coming up the stairs, and called to him: "Peter! Peter! it is worse than anything we have slept in yet." Peter looked in, hesitated and then gathered up all he could carry in the way of luggage, whilst I took the rest and we just precipitated ourselves downstairs. We ran from that dreadful place. The rain was pelting down. "Never mind!" said Peter breathlessly—"anywhere, anywhere—even into the rain."

A crowd had as usual collected and a young Jew boy told us in German that he would show us something really good and that we must follow

him. He ran out into the rain and directed us under a great archway. The noise of our machine set women and children screaming and crying. By the light of our lamps I could see right and left of me, through the open doors, wretched families huddled to sleep in single rooms. The Jew boy seized a suitcase and told me to follow him up a pitch dark staircase. By this time I was exasperated—no—by gad, no! I don't follow anybody up any dark staircase in the middle of the night. I snatched the case out of his hand, and amidst the shouts and the imprecations of the aroused inhabitants, we noisily sped out of the echoing archway and made our way alone to a sober-looking building that we found for ourselves called the Hotel Warszawa. Here the proprietor looked at us wonderingly; we were dripping from head to foot; he looked from us to the machine and then at the luggage. "Is this a 'sport' journey you are doing?" he asked.

Satanella was sheltered in a shed, with a mare, a foal, a cow, and fifteen inches of stable manure. And we went to bed, wet and supperless, in our clothes. Next morning, as no food could be supplied by our hotel, we scoured the town for breakfast, and were told that the "restauracjas" did not open before ten.

We pushed straight on to Rovno over bad roads but attractive country, with here and there some big pine-woods. We shied at the very name and also the façade of the Rovno "Bristol," and were directed to a small hotel called the "Rzymski," which we never would have found unaided. It was approached through an archway in the police station, guarded by a man with a rifle, and stood at the farther end o the police barracks backyard, in turn guarded by large, loud-grunting pigs.

Once past the defences we found it CLEAN, and were so overjoyed at being given coffee-pots full of hot water to wash in that we lingered there thirty-six hours, to recuperate before making the final plunge across the Russian frontier some 40 miles away.

(*Note from Peter's diary.*—"In Germany the hotels give you no soap, in Western Poland no towels, in Eastern Poland no bedclothes; I wonder if in Russia there will be any beds. God bless my happy home.")

CHAPTER VII

ACROSS THE RUSSIAN FRONTIER

OUR Russian visas were good to August 1st, so rather dramatically we took the road from Rovno on July 31st at noon and came to Korets, the frontier town, at 4 p.m. This was a great day for us, the crowning of our efforts. The last two and a half hours to the Russian frontier seemed longer than all the three weeks past.

People looked at us wonderingly as we continued unhesitatingly through the town. Korets is the terminus, and for years nobody was ever known to push on beyond it. We passed by a sugar factory on our left, and just beyond the factory the high road was completely grass-grown. Outside the factory gate a party of three or four men appeared. One of them was a policeman and we asked him the way. He affected not to understand any of our known languages, he was sullen, like all the Polish police when they are spoken to. "What do you want?" asked

a young man in perfect English. "We want the Russian frontier." He pointed down the grass-grown road. "It is a mile away—where have you come from?" "We are from London."

Clearly this was most unusual. The English-speaking man suggested that we should delay an hour and lunch with him at the factory and cross the Russian frontier afterwards. He happened to be Count Potocki, whose brother we had met in Warsaw. The sugar factory belonged to them, it was in fact part of an estate which was once one of the largest land estates in Russia and of which nothing now remains but this little bit on the Polish side.

He took us to lunch at the director's house, and the director telephoned to the frontier officials that we were coming. These in turn communicated with the Russians and asked them if they would kindly let us pass after five o'clock, the official closing hour. "We have been waiting for them for two days!" came the answer. The Count and his director seemed rather concerned that we should be going into Russia. They warned us of all the dangerous possibilities. They offered, among other things, to send my diamond watch back for me to England, because to go into Soviet Russia with a diamond watch was pro-

voking trouble. On second thoughts, however, it occurred to them that, " as you are taking your life to them—you may as well take your diamond watch."

Count Potocki and the director accompanied us down to the frontier post and interpreted for us with the Polish and afterwards with the Russian officials. The Poles were slow and inclined to be punctilious. Their Customs officer was an eternity stamping our papers, nor when that was done would he raise the barrier to let us pass. That was the prerogative only of the Commandant, and he was not there. They sent for him, but his absence created another long delay. Meanwhile we leaned upon the Polish barrier and conversed across the 15-ft. space of no man's land with " the Bolsheviks " across the way. The Red Army soldiers look very picturesque in the face of the evening light with their pointed caps and their slung rifles.

The stillness and the isolation of the place was most unusual. There were Soviet soldiers squatting in the high corn all along the line, on lookout, but there seemed to me no reason for any defensive attitude. Nobody attempts to cross from one country into the other. Not even a Russian country cart comes down the

great grass-grown high road, no Russian peasant comes marketing, only our host sometimes passes through at four o'clock in the morning when no one is looking! He told us that sometimes he rode across country to his old estate, and got back again by six, but his ancestral home was too far in, he could not reach it.

He asked the Soviet officials if they would let us through, although the hour was growing late. They replied that when the Polish officials had finished with us, the Russians would not be more than ten minutes with their formalities. (Meant no doubt to impress the Poles with the simplicity of Russian methods in comparison with the Polish!) "Where can they sleep to-night?" Potocki asked.

The Russians thought we should push on to Novogradvolinsk, 18 miles away.

"But it will be dark," protested the Count.

"Nichevo," [1] answered the phlegmatic soldier.

"Will you give them a convoy?"

I understood the word "convoy," and I observed a smile on the face of the soldier.

"They will not need a convoy," he replied.

"Are there no bandits?"

"No, the road is quite clear. Our condition

[1] It does not matter.

of things over here is not quite as bad as you hear ! "

We turned at the sound of horses' hoofs, and beheld in a cloud of dust an approaching cavalcade. It was the Police Commandant, accompanied by two others on horseback, with a small foal trotting at their side. The Commandant was very dignified. His face retained its solemnity even when his horse shied at our machine. He had certainly kept us waiting forty minutes, but his presence seemed a very important and ceremonious necessity. He gave a cursory glance at our passports, saluted, bowed—then at last the red and white pole was raised. At the same time the Russians raised theirs. Two or three Soviet soldiers rushed towards us, and we were in Russia !

Our late friends waited and watched to see how we fared at Bolshevik hands. They had advised us (as Warsaw also did) on no account to show our letter of recommendation from Rakovsky. The argument being that, as Rakovsky was for so long Governor of the Ukraine, and it was due to his efforts that order was re-established, he must have had a great many people shot. The friends of those people would surely shoot Rakovsky's friends. Besides, the Poles assured us, no

frontier official would recognise Rakovsky's signature. There ensued some discussion around us. Although our passports were in order, there was of course no mention of a motor bicycle. The Russian asked the Pole what their procedure was. The Pole with some superiority waved the other half of our triptyque. The Russian soldier looked helpless and hopeless, as an elderly bachelor might who had been given a baby to hold by a woman who hadn't returned. Our Polish friends shouted across the barrier a translation of the discussion. It seemed to me then, that in spite of their advice to the contrary, the Rakovsky letter should be put to the test. I handed it to the Commandant. All the comrades crowded round to read it. I did not know what it said, but it was rich with exquisitely engraved hammer and sickle in red. Its effect was magical. The comrade handed it back to me reverently, saluted, shook hands and waved us forward with a gesture of "All Russia is yours." We waved to those across the border, especially to the good-looking Count, who had watched us get through on to soil that once was his, and where he could not follow.

Our road ran uphill towards the dark Potocki forests, and with a sense of triumph and of task

accomplished, Satanella speeded upward like a winner. Two versts onward we stopped at a sign from a gentleman in a cloth cap, who stood by the roadside as if expecting us. He was in fact the Customs officer who had been warned of our arrival. The Custom House being somewhere in the village off the main road, he very obligingly examined our baggage (not too severely) there and then. Again the Rakovsky letter worked like magic. Our motor bicycle being the first to cross the frontier, there was no precedent, and we were not asked to pay any deposit. Smilingly we were bowed onward.

It was dark when we reached the small straggling town of Novogradvolinsk. Unlike the small towns that we had grown accustomed to in Poland, this one was brightly lit by tall electric lights. Suddenly, from out of a doorway, a man in a white tunic and a military red cap, and followed by a group of people, came towards us and in clear English announced: "I am the Chief of Police. A place is prepared for you. Follow me, please."

The tone of his voice left no doubt as to his friendliness. It was evidently not a prison that had been prepared! He preceded us, walking rapidly, while we followed him, crawling along on second speed noisily. A party of officials

followed behind us, and, as I looked back, it seemed to me that our rearguard consisted of the inhabitants of the entire town. This curious procession paused finally in front of a well-built house. In an instant we were hemmed in by a dense crowd. Peter was shown an electrically lit woodshed in which to house Satanella, while I was led into the house, and ushered into a spacious room, where red plush chairs were arranged expectantly around a table. The "comrades" introduced themselves. Apparently they were the Soviet of the little town.

Peter came in from the woodshed and looked with some bewilderment at the strange roomful. I knew that he was desperately tired, that he likes to go to bed early and hates smoke in the room in which he has to sleep. I could not help feeling half amused, although half sorry for a typical Englishman in the midst of Russians for the first time!

(*Note from Peter's diary.*—"I returned to Clare to find her receiving the Town Soviet, who were calling in a body, and I realised with some surprise that this terrible thing, a 'Soviet,' is nothing more nor less than a Council, and the Town Council of Novogradvolinsk was calling on the

first English people who had come to their town since the war.

"This Town Council sends its representatives to the District Council, in this case at Kiev, and the Kiev Council sends its representatives to Moscow. When I was asked if we had established Soviets in England yet, and whether our farmers were Communists, I was able to reply that we had had Soviets for several hundred years, and that our farmers do sit on them without having to be Communists. There is far more similarity between England and Russia—between our local governing bodies and the system of Soviets—than either nation realises, and the Town Soviet of Novogradvolinsk was as surprised at the discovery as I.")

We all sipped our glasses of "chai," and innumerable questions were put to us through the interpreter. It was news these people wanted, news of the world that is shut out as completely as if the frontier bar were a shutter that had descended from the sky.

We had to tell about Poland, about Germany, and then about England and the Soviet Conference—Rakovsky's work—what impression he created upon the bourgeoisie—upon the British

workers—what of King George bidding him to the palace? etc.

I wondered anxiously if we were in for an all-night sitting. But it was desperately interesting, and the avidity with which these workers and peasants consumed our news was in itself impressive. Presently I saw that the door of the next room was ajar, and people were furtively glancing through. I expressed a suitable regret in case we had inconvenienced the family whose best room had evidently been temporarily requisitioned.

"It is the custom in Russia to offer the hospitality of a private house to passing travellers," it was explained. "Besides, the family have four rooms for themselves: more than they need."

The crowd in the street outside remained, straining on tiptoe to see us through the windows, and nothing would make them disperse until our friends had taken leave of us and we were left "enfin seuls" like the proverbial wedding couple, and the light went out.

CHAPTER VIII

OVER THE ROAD TO KIEV

THE next morning the Chief of the Police fetched us in his fast "droshki" and took us to a restaurant for breakfast. The restaurant keeper opened up tins of every conceivable herring and sardine and surrounded us with plates full of cucumbers and tomatoes. We hesitatingly asked for eggs. The Chief of Police smiled: "The English," he said, "never change their habits, wherever they go they always have their eggs for breakfast!" The little peasant girl who waited upon us had joined the Communist Party three months before. With desperate youthful earnestness she asked me in German the following questions:

"What are the conditions of the workers in England?"

"At what age does the youth leave school and begin work?"

"How many hours is the English work day?"

"Do the young workers also work the full eight hours?"

"Are the women paid an equal wage with the men for the same work?"

"Are all the women workers organised into unions?"

Which, seeing that I have never posed as an expert in Labour matters, was extremely confusing, and Peter sat opposite me, mischievously winking and never attempting to rescue me.

After breakfast we were taken to the Ispolkom, or Town Hall, where all the Soviet awaited us. Here we were all photographed in a group, for the President said we were the first English people in Novogradvolinsk since the Soviet Republic came into being, and he wished to commemorate the occasion. Our hosts, who would not allow us to pay for our night's hospitality nor for our sumptuous breakfast, had actually sent to Jitomir, some 50 miles away, for a large car, and they begged us to avail ourselves of it. It took us quite a long time—in the middle of the street with a crowd growing in size every minute—to assure the President that it was quite useless, as we had to get there on our own machine, that we had come from England on it, and we had to get to Constanti-

THE TOWN SOVIET OF NOVOGRAD-VOLINSK.

Taken with the author and her brother (3) to mark the occasion. No. 10 is our tame policeman.

WE LEAVE NOVOGRAD-VOLINSK—HEADED BY THE CHIEF OF POLICE.

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nople and home on it. He asked what it weighed, and actually suggested that it should be hoisted inside the motor-car. (Poor little Satanella, to be looked upon so lightly !) Finally we consented to put our luggage in the Soviet car, and off we started for Jitomir.

At midday we ran the machine up a side-track into a wood, and ate the picnic lunch that we had brought with us. The inhabitants of a neighbouring cottage came out and stalked us, as also two fierce wolf dogs, who came nearer and nearer. Presently a youth and two girls and several small children, having plucked up courage, came and sat by us. Upon hearing that we were *Angliski*, they asked if we were delegates. Apparently " delegates " were the only foreigners they knew of who came to Russia. Conversation being rather halting, the youth gave a shout to some invisible being, and promptly there appeared, as if from nowhere, a square-built, florid-faced lout, who asked if we spoke German. He himself was German, so he said, although born in the Ukraine and never having been to Germany. (How curious it would be if in the United States the second generation of an American-born immigrant still persisted in claiming his original nationality !) Through

this German-speaking peasant, the Russian asked us such questions as :

" Have you a Soviet Government in England ? "

" Are not your farmers Communists ? "

To which we counter-question :

" Are you yourselves Communists ? "

They answered in the negative, but with an air of indifference, as if it was quite unimportant.

" How goes it ? " I asked.

" Karasho ! " (all right).

Everything quiet in the country, they said. " It has been bad, but now it is going well." The wood we were sitting in had formed part of a great private property, they informed us. Now it belonged to the State, " and we may no longer cut down any trees as we used to during the Revolution."

From this it was hard to determine whether they preferred the present period of peace, or the past days of storm, when they could cut down any trees in the forest for their own use ! Without so much as a nod of farewell the German labourer suddenly got up and ambled clumsily away. The Russians, however, remained with us until we moved on. They were very smiling and friendly and desired to talk, but our conversation was necessarily monosyllabic.

The car that carried our luggage got there ahead of us, and the comrade in charge came back along the road to see if we needed help. For 2 versts outside the town the road was very bad, and a rainstorm overtook us. The comrade waved a key at us to cheer us on; it was the key of the room in the hotel in which he had deposited our luggage. This proved to be a Communist hostelry. Our room was as big as a ballroom. It was not only large but apparently newly whitewashed. Two huge oleographs, the one labelled Trotski and the other Rakovsky, hung just above each of the small iron beds with their red blankets. If a fanatical anti-Bolshevik had wished to make anti-Soviet propaganda by representing these two leaders as everything that is execrable, he might have produced these two pictures! I selected the guardianship of Rakovsky because he looked the less villainous! But for certain reasons I was unable to sleep on the bed, and found it preferable to spend the night on the long trestle table with a leather suitcase under my head! The next morning, after a rather superficial wash at the communal washstand in the corridor, aching in every bone of my body, I was ready for an early start. The night had cost only one rouble and a

half, and by eating at the Communist restaurant we paid a few kopecks only, and nobody accepted tips. Such were the prices made especially for Communists, in contrast with the price of rooms in an average hotel, which we very soon learned varied from 8 to 12 roubles a night.

When Peter went to fetch Satanella at the State garage he found it cleaned, even unto the valves, and the mechanic concerned disappeared in order to avoid the humiliation of being offered a bourgeois tip!

In the midst of the usual dense crowd we started off on our 80-mile run to Kiev. For 60 miles the road was the best we had experienced since we left Bavaria, and extremely beautiful, varying between dense forests and open agricultural land. There were no hedges to mark the individual ownership, merely the neat cultivated strips of different colours according to the varying crop, which gave the land the appearance of a gigantic patchwork quilt. The cottages were in far better condition than those in Poland, fences were neat and trim and it seemed to be the season for rethatching the roofs.

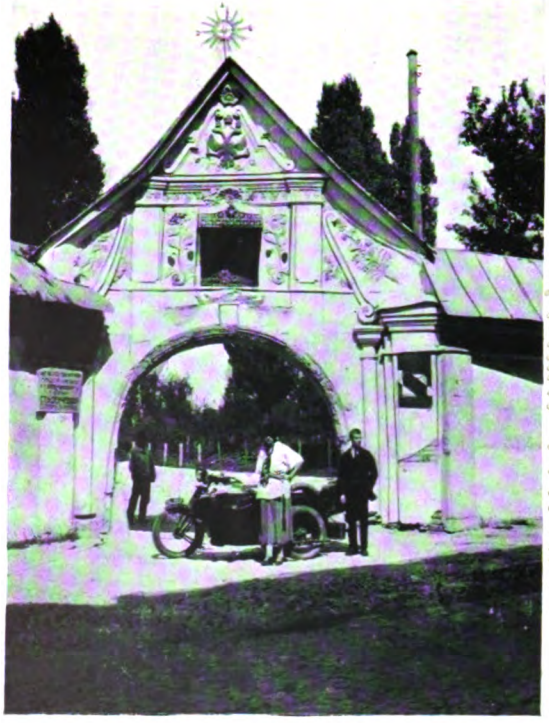
People watched us go by without any undue surprise, except among the little shepherds and swineherds guarding their mixed flocks. These

we seemed invariably to provoke to a pitch of shouting excitement.

The last 20 miles to Kiev were execrable. The road seemed literally to have collapsed. In places it had dropped a foot. The farm carts had blazed a trail on the edge of the fields alongside, and this we pursued for some distance until it suddenly led into a muddy pond. We were faced with the alternatives of retracing our way or crossing the ditch to get back onto the road. Peter of course made for the ditch. (I leapt out.) He had always boasted that Satanella could go across country. A large motor came crawling by, and stopped to see the motor bicycle negotiate the ditch. This, by a miracle, being successfully accomplished, the men in the motor gestured to me an invitation to get into their car, but naturally I did not abandon Peter. Farther on we found that the road was in process of mending. Foundations were being laid and stacks of stones bordered the road for miles and miles. A giant steam-roller bore the magic inscription *Chicago*. It was with intense relief that we sighted the town of Kiev, "the mother of all the towns of Russia," upon the hill-top in the distance, with her golden domes glittering in the evening sunlight. We reached the height,

after passing for some way through a garden suburb full of summer villas in a more or less complete state of wreckage. The town of Kiev, however, bore little sign of destruction: the houses were fine, the streets wide-avenued and as well paved as any in London. Nearly every man was dressed in white linen, which created an unexpected effect of elegance! They walked hurriedly as if on business bent. It is strange to see Russians hurrying; it gives one an impression of America.

The question that arose immediately was how to discover the best hotel. Our Baedeker of 1914 informed us that the first and best hotel was the Continental, in the Nikolayevskaya (with garden court!); but if we asked for it, would not the people think us Rip van Winkles? Had not the Continental become a Government department, and was not the street probably renamed Rakovskaya? There was no help for it; we had to ask. A man in a black blouse, looking as typically Fascist as any in Rome, told us hurriedly the one thing we wanted to know: "Go to the Continental, in the Nikolayevskaya!" (How Conservative of Kiev!) The man, however, must have been a Communist, and as such knew exactly where strange foreigners arriving in Kiev



ENTRANCE TO THE CONVENT OF ST. MICHAEL, KIEV.

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WE ARRIVE AT KIEV.

should go. The Continental proved to be no longer an hotel, but a "Soviet House," whatever that might be. A crowd collected before the door. We explained that we did not want the Soviet House, what we wanted was a bourgeois hotel. Everybody shouted advice to us in various languages. Finally a little fellow who spoke German volunteered to take us to the best hotel, and he balanced himself on the edge of the sidecar and we started off. He directed us to another hill-top (they say that Kiev is built on seven, like Rome), and the hotel proved to be a new one (post-Revolution), called the Krasnikiev (Red-Kiev), and there we found just the sort of rooms that we dreamed of. White enamelled furniture, brown holland curtains immaculately clean, a washstand with running water, and—well, if I had become a judge of beds, these were all right.

We had great difficulty, however, in shedding our guide. He stood in the middle of my bedroom with his leather cap on, lighted a cigarette and told us all about himself. He came from Palestine, he said—no, not an Israelite, but a Turk! His native language was Arabic, but he was born in Kiev and so acquired Russian! In the United States he joined Buffalo Bill's show as a "Luft-Spieler," which interpreted meant,

I suppose, an acrobat. In the United States, however, he failed to learn English; he did not explain why he learnt German. He wished to attach himself permanently as guide and interpreter. I said good-bye to him very firmly, but perhaps I thanked him for his help too amiably. An hour later he was standing outside my door. He explained that he was waiting! Later still we found him in the street; he explained that he was still waiting.

CHAPTER IX

OUR FIRST DAY IN KIEV

Our first day in Kiev happened to coincide with Sunday the second of August, the anniversary of the World War. Early in the morning processions of Communists, men and women, with banners, and singing revolutionary songs, paraded through our street. The whole procession in all its glory was, we were told, to march through the town at eleven o'clock. We were faced with the alternative of seeing the Communist demonstration or going to Sunday service at St. Sofia, the oldest church in Russia. Kiev used sometimes to be called the " Jerusalem of Russia " on account of the pilgrims who flocked yearly to St. Sofia. We felt that we were in a sort of a way pilgrims, modern pilgrims, who had come 1,500 miles on a motor bicycle, and we wanted to give thanks. St. Sofia's fifteen gilded domes rising monumentally at the end of our street and my memory of Russian church choirs decided us.

I have never understood the technique of the

Orthodox Church services. Their Mass seems to be an unending ceremony. One arrives in the middle, and still it goes on and on. We found the Church of St. Sofia full of people, and for an hour and a half (there are no seats in the Russian churches) we stood shoulder to shoulder with a solid mass of shifting congregation. That is to say the church was all the while full, but people drifted out and new people took their place. Never have I seen a more beautiful church or heard a more glorious choir. Usually, it seems to me, the human voice, unaccompanied by music, sounds thin, but there were bass voices in this Russian choir that sounded like an organ note, a "vox humana" that held one spell-bound. Meanwhile the Metropolitan, dressed in cloth of gold, with his jewelled mitre on his head, performed the mysterious rites that are only half seen through the gilded doorway. Periodically he came out to the congregation and blessed them, with lighted candles in each hand, with which he made the sign of the cross. There was much to hold one's attention, the ceremony, the congregation and the church itself, with its walls covered with eleventh-century frescoes. It was built in 1037 by the Grand Prince Yaroslav, in gratitude for his victory over the

Pechenegrins. A mellowness and a beauty mingled with the sound of the singing and the spirit of the people. The Russians are emotional and unself-conscious. Every soul in this church had come with faith, to pray. There were young peasant girls in national costume, ribbons of all colours flowing from their hair and rows of corals round their necks. Next to me a tall slim youth with long hair looked as if he had stepped out of a Pre-Raphaelite picture. Someone pushed past him; it was an old peasant woman with a white linen handkerchief tied under her chin, and flowers in her hands. She elbowed her way to the holy picture which stood in the middle of the aisle. She kissed the feet of the Christ portrait, arranged her little flowers round the frame and was lost again in the crowd. Constantly the people kissed the holy picture, some kissed the feet, others kissed the sash. One man, gaunt, wild-eyed and long-haired, stood up before the image and crossed himself reverently four or five times. Then, having kissed the holy feet and crossed himself again, he pushed his way through to the great gilded Ikonostas that formed a screen before the altar. He carried a lighted candle taper in his hand and bowed before each ikon, kissing the silver frame of each, and con-

tinued to cross himself with visionary fervour, quite oblivious of the rest of the congregation.

The faces of the people during the singing were transcendent. The whole thing was so moving that we remained even through the sermon, of which we understood not a word, but everyone else stood rigidly attentive. Finally, with dramatic suddenness, the two great gates were closed, a sky-blue curtain was drawn behind them and the sanctuary was hidden from view. The gates were magnificently wrought silver and gilt, surmounted by a gigantic double-headed Imperial eagle and crown!

When we emerged from the church the air was full of the sounds of drums and of military music. We were, after all, in time to see the Communist procession. I watched the faces of those who were in the church with us, but their expressions were completely stoical. We followed the procession in its course to the Karl Marx statue in front of the Ispolkom. After the workers' march past came the cavalry and infantry. Detachments in their gas-masks, looking like devils instead of men, armoured cars, tractors dragging 9-in. howitzers, etc; an impressive show, but in their midst clowns, parodying the Allied soldiers, generals and statesmen. An Imperial

AT KIEV. THE COMMUNIST PROCESSION, AUGUST 2ND.

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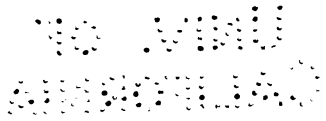

German officer dragging a Russian by a rope round the neck. Poincaré in a top hat on horseback. Banners emblazoning the iniquity of the " Imperialist " war—but just before the end, unfortunately for us, the sky opened and let fall a deluge. We sought shelter under a tree, but it was futile. A tropical downpour drenched us to the skin in a few minutes. The side streets became cascades, everybody scurried for shelter.

In this state, tired, wet and hungry, we returned to our hotel and demanded food. We were informed, however, that no restaurant existed in our hotel, and that every restaurant in the town was closed on account of the anniversary. It was by this time verging on five o'clock. (People lunch at three or four o'clock in Russia.) I produced my letter of introduction from Mr. Rakovsky addressed to the President of the Kiev Soviet and induced the hotel proprietor (a Communist " de convenance ") to telephone to the seat of Government and announce our existence. The proprietor hesitated. He obviously thought we were English lunatics, and was not quite sure if headquarters should be bothered with us, but I insisted. The effect was miraculous. In less than half an hour a comrade had fetched us in a car and taken us to dine with four others

in the famous "Continental" Hotel. We were friends of Rakovsky? "But," they asked, "where have you come from—Moscow?" "No." "Where then? How did you get in?" "Novogradvolinsk." They looked at one another, and then asked: "You have had no difficulties?" "Difficulties? No!" Everyone seemed astonished and relieved.

And why," I asked, "do you have a procession of the Red Army to commemorate the Imperialist War day?"

"To remind the people," they answered, "that the Red Army protects our revolutionary gains, that the Red Army is a defensive army, and that it will never fight another Imperialistic cause."

To complete the end of our perfect day, the comrades took us after dinner to the "operette" (the theatres all over Russia close on Mondays instead of Sundays, in order that the workers may have their chance of going). This was the theatre in which the Czar's reactionary Minister Stolypin was murdered in the front row of the stalls. We were admitted with the comrades to the Czar's box. There we met an Italian Communist, and an American. The operette was

none other than the Viennese *Count of Luxemburg*, given in London so long ago that I had forgotten it. The comrades seemed rather conscious that it was bourgeois and old-fashioned. In the *entr'acte* the housemaid from our hotel, elegantly attired, came up to the balcony of the box and asked me what I thought of Kiev's musical comedy. She spoke good French. I told her that I had already seen Kiev's musical comedy in London. "But," she persisted, "what do you think of our audience?" "It's much the same as ours," I answered. She would not believe that it was the same. "But do not your English women go to the theatre in diamonds?" "Not since the war," I answered. She looked at me strangely, as if she had just heard for the first time that England also had had a revolution.

CHAPTER X

DAYS IN KIEV

In comparison with Moscow, Kiev is quite different. Kiev is not cosmopolitan, and we met very few Jews. The Soviet of Kiev seemed to be composed for the most part of real Russians. Nor was there any atmosphere of suspicion and mistrust, which is so evident in Moscow. Few of our friends could speak anything but Russian, they even said it was "bourgeois" to speak foreign languages, whereupon, to the horror of my brother, I accused them of being sadly lacking in Communistic internationalism. Our interpreter was a charming girl from the Foreign Affairs Department. She was extremely able and cultured, but not a Communist.

Our chief friends, who were kind to us above all others, were Soltikov, the Commissar of Public Instruction, and Baran, the head of the professional unions.

Soltikov was a good-looking young engineer of prodigious physical strength and high spirits.

Names, left to right—Tavarish Soltikov, Mrs. Sheridan, Mme. Veronika Cherniakovskaia Lt.-Comdr. Frewen.

Baran, slightly older and more serious, the rather responsible father of a family. These two showed us most of what Kiev contained of interest.

At the end of one perfect day we made an expedition up the River Dnieper, and landed on a farther shore. It was on this occasion that we amused ourselves playing hide and seek in rather apache fashion. Soltikov caught our charming interpreter, picked her up in his arms as if she had been a straw, and threw her to my brother, who—let her drop. (English shares slumped that evening.)

During our short week in Kiev we saw not only the churches and the plays and the wrestling contests, but also the Soviet Institutions. The "sights," however, came first (on the principle of the Church Army, which feeds a man before it preaches to him).

The great show place of Kiev is the Lavra Monastery. It stands outside the town on a hill-side over the river. It was founded in the eleventh century. A hundred years later it was under the direct control of the Patriarch of Constantinople. Yet a century later the monastery was attacked and partly destroyed by the Tartars. It is curious how Kiev, although so

far from the East, brings one into almost immediate contact with it. We were taken to Lavra by our official friends in a Goverment car, which rattled noisily over the courtyard of cobblestones, awaking monks and pilgrims alike. The pilgrims (before the war they amounted to 150,000 yearly) were camped in small dirty groups in doorways, and were covered with flies. The monks belonged traditionally to princely houses, and the annual pre-war revenue of the convent had amounted to a million roubles. As they were mostly counter-revolutionaries, the number of their fraternity had greatly decreased. Nevertheless they received the Communist comrades with stoical serenity and escorted us through their catacombs. These underground passages which extended for some miles were dug out of the sandstone cliff. We saw the coffins of seventy-three "saints" buried in the niches in which they chose to immure their lives. Some of the bodies lay in a mummified state in open coffins covered over with some beautiful piece of old stuff. By taper-light, through these narrow, dismal underground corridors, we followed, one behind another. (What a chance to murder the lot of us!) At certain junctions in the passage-way we met parties of peasant pilgrims, who were so much interested

in us that they forgot to be interested in their saints. An old monk, who uncovered the shrivelled remains of some wizened saint, related to us how the soul of the dead one appeared to one of the monks and besought him to let his body remain in peace. One almost felt for the dead man who was continually being made a peep-show for pilgrims and Communists alike, and the monk told the story with earnest conviction. The Communists listened with indulgent tolerance, as though the monk had been a child telling about his belief in fairies.

The Lavra Monastery contained a new museum named the Rakovsky, founded by the present Ambassador to London when he was Governor of the Ukraine. It contained a very precious collection of ikons, manuscripts, illuminated missals, church ornaments, etc., dating back to the eleventh century. These had been collected from various churches and monasteries. There was also a very remarkable fourth-century picture painted on wood, the earliest example of religious painting known, and the only example of its kind, I believe, in Europe.

Among other places in Kiev of interest, we were shown a small gallery which before the war

was the private collection of Mr. Hanienko. It is worthy of comment because, although small, it was very perfect of its kind, and Kiev proudly referred to it as "The little Hermitage." It contained a rather unknown and extremely beautiful Rembrandt, a portrait of the artist's father, represented in a turban against a golden background—a picture which held its own with any of the best Rembrandts in the Hermitage of Petrograd. There was also a sketch by Velazquez for the big picture of the little Infanta Isabella. A small Frans Hals portrait of Descartes, besides the usual Filippino Lippis, Peruginos, Ingres, Bouchers, etc. A room had been specially built for five Beauvais Tapestries designed by Natoir. Another room was entirely consecrated to ikons of the famous fourteenth-century Novgorod school.

As far as the theatres were concerned we were rather out of luck, for it was "off season" in Kiev. A Leningrad theatrical company on tour arrived, however, and to our intense surprise produced Oscar Wilde's *Ideal Husband* for a packed house. Our friends were no less surprised to find that neither of us had ever read the play in English, and they did their very best to translate it for us. It was extremely well acted, and

gave one every illusion of English Society life; they even succeeded in portraying the English "gentleman," clothes and all.

In our box there was a very beautiful young girl, who had been a soldier and done the retreat from Poland with the Red Army. She had short dark hair, regular features, and eyes that expressed courage, vision and fanaticism. From her I learned that sex complexities can be obliterated by real camaraderie. "I forgot I was a woman," she said, referring to her life in the ranks; "and they never remembered it." The Russian woman is the most unself-conscious, the most detached, the most highly evolved feminist in the world.

When we got back to the hotel after the play, we begged the housemaid of our floor (who also had returned from the play) to bring us two cups of tea. She demurred on the grounds that there was no samovar boiling at that hour. Seeing our disappointment (for we had not had time to dine), she agreed to boil a samovar, on the condition that she might be allowed to have a cup with us. The samovar took an hour to mature, but the housemaid was charmingly entertaining. She spoke several languages fluently, and said she enjoyed talking with foreigners. She satisfied

herself, through me, that the fashion was to wear skirts far shorter than were being worn in Russia, and finally she carried off my best dress (I might say my only other dress) in triumph, to copy it !

CHAPTER XI

THE RIVER BOAT TO EKATERINOSLAV

It was with real regret that we eventually put our Satanella on board the river boat, said good-bye to our Kiev friends and started off down the Dnieper for Ekaterinoslav. It was sunset, and the shabby, rusty old paddle-boat, crowded with a mass of humanity and baggage, filled us with foreboding. The peasants settled down for the night on the hard seats or on the deck. One had to pick one's way among the prostrate bodies, as if one were in a refugee ship. It had evidently never occurred to the shipping company to construct bunks for their mass of passengers who do not travel first class. Russians are deplorably philosophic, they seem to accept everything as it comes, without complaint. Our grim little cabin, in which we were destined to sleep for two nights and eat our meals, proved, however, to be better than it looked, and whatever Russian discomforts may be, one is almost always compensated by some exquisite incident which makes

everything seem worth while. For instance, to my dying day I will remember the song of the boatmen that awakened me at four o'clock one morning and called me to the open porthole. The picture which I saw was of a little boat containing four figures, rowing towards a luminous pink dawn. The song, which grew fainter as the distance increased, was not the Volga boat-song but something rhythmically like it. Even Peter stirred in his sleep and murmured: "It is good."

The fact of being unable to speak the language was exasperating beyond words. The only people with whom we could talk were Jews, because Yiddish is so like German, but theirs was not a Russian opinion. Four or five "N.E.P." [1] men approached me, and shamelessly unloaded their complaints. They explained that trading conditions were intolerable for them under the Soviet system. They would like to go to Palestine, they said, to that "wonderful new Jewish world which the English are protecting." But it was difficult for them to get away, because everyone in Russia is looked upon as Bolshevik by the outside world and visas are denied. They assured me that the best time in their lives was

[1] Traders who had arisen as the result of the "New Economic Policy."

PEASANTS ON THE BANKS OF THE DNIEPER.

(Photo from the river boat).

THE PEASANTS WHO CROWDED TO MEET THE BOAT ON THE DNIEPER.

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during the German occupation. "The Germans spent money like water." They wished the Germans had remained. They made no pretence of patriotism, they had no pride of nationality. The peasants, with an expression of passive wonderment, watched them. A few Communists on board watched also, but with disapproval. They probably suspected the trend of the conversation, but as they could not understand anything but Russian they could not join in. If only I could have talked with the peasants! What a chance—two whole days with a shipload of them! They were real peasants, whose homes were in the remote villages on the flat banks of the Dnieper. Those who flocked to the water's edge when the ship went alongside were real story-book peasants, all dressed up in their national best; huge baskets of eggs or of fruit hung on their arms, and they were garlanded with strings of onions that hung down to their feet. They did a brisk trade with the ship's cook. These were the people who, in spite of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which gave Germany all the Ukraine up to the Don Basin, organised on their own account a sabotage that forced the Germans out. A simple, stolid, dogged, imperturbable class.

It required the co-operation of some of the stoutest peasants, and of the ship's personnel, to get Satanella ashore when we reached Ekaterinoslav. The gangway was steep and too narrow. They knocked the gangway's balustrade off as if it was of no consequence, and I watched her being pushed up the steep plank with the side-car wheel hanging in space.

Peter had decided that we should not linger in Ekaterinoslav, but push on directly for Alexandrovsk, the next large town on the map. Why he had this prejudice against Catherine's town I did not know, unless it was that a town that dates back only to the eighteenth century might seem to be of no interest. My own attitude was one of complete indifference. I cared neither where we stopped nor how long we pushed on, or even if we broke down. "Push" all he would, I was sublimely satisfied that we could not "push" out of Russia. The Black Sea was still a long way off, and meanwhile, so long as I was in Russia, any place was the same to me. On the several occasions that we broke down outside of Russia, my anxiety had been lest we might never arrive, but having got there, at worst one might have to remain, and I was delighted to remain, either in a town, a

village, in the ditch or in prison. "Nichevo. Nichevo."

Peter was less neutral. He scheduled plans (doubtless his Navy training); he meant to arrive at certain places at certain hours, or on certain dates. I did not argue, I just felt that I had a little "entente" with Providence and resigned myself to the decree of fate.

It was very hot that day we landed in Ekaterinoslav, so hot that we had to cover over the petrol tin with a spare coat in order that it should not burst. We thought we knew our way out of the town, which incidentally seemed to be a mass of ruins.

Alexandrovsk, so far as we could make out, was situated at the point of a triangle from Ekaterinoslav, and so one could travel to it either from the extreme right or from the extreme left. We started off towards the extreme right. This led us through miles of suburban ruins to a dust track outside the town. Near a church (it was Sunday) we stopped and asked if we were on the right road for Alexandrovsk. The peasants, in their Sunday-go-meeting market-carts, seemed not to be interested in Alexandrovsk; they were really concerned about our safety. Realising that we were idiot foreigners who could not under-

stand, they made the gesture of gunfiring for our benefit, and advised us in unmistakable dumb language not to go any farther. Their gestures were far more eloquent than any arguments and naturally I did not want to go on, but Peter said I had insisted on coming to Russia, although everyone had predicted we would be shot—"and so you shall be shot," he said quite gruffly (the sun always affects him). I held my breath, as well as my tongue, and prayed that the worst might not happen. We had not gone very far when a soldier standing by his horse ordered us to stop. I do not remember that he had a gun, and he seemed to have no desire to shoot us. I do remember, however, that his chin had the young beginning of a fair beard that had never known a razor. He looked like a medieval picture of a northern barbarian. He explained that we were on the outskirts of the local firing ground.

As we were obviously not on the road for Alexandrovsk, we retraced our steps and started off towards the extreme left. That led us over a wooden war-bridge that spans the Dnieper. The Dnieper being (or seeming) several miles wide, that bridge with its uneven corduroy planks and its masses of slow market-carts seemed to

AUTHOR AND BROTHER WITH THE MEMBERS AND COMMANDANT OF THE FIRE BRIGADE WHO MENDED THE MACHINE AT EKATERINOSLAV.

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us unending. On the other side, after a couple of miles of burning sun and choking dust, we decided we were again on the wrong road. Our decision coincided with the discovery that the bar which joins the sidecar to the bicycle was cracked. This settled any possibility of pushing on. We returned to the town, inquired for the best hotel, and somehow (does one ever know exactly how these things come about in Russia?) we came into contact with the fire brigade, who took charge of Satanella and offered to mend her. We left her in their hands. Almost simultaneously with our arrival at the hotel, the local newspaper reporter called upon us. A telegram had arrived, so he informed us, announcing that "Lord" Churchill's brother and sister were expected in the town, on their motor bicycle tour round the world. It seemed evident from the newspaper reporter that the Churchill relations were to be given metaphorical bouquets. Presumably the Anglo-Soviet Conference had obliterated even Winston's anti-Bolshevism.

Meanwhile, as it was Sunday, I found nobody at the Ispolkom when I called there, except a young sentry who was in complete possession of the silent building, and told me there was no possibility of finding any official until the morrow.

So Peter and I walked about the town. The main street, with its avenued garden walk down the middle of it, was full of benches and bedding-out plants, and also full of people. The whole town seemed to be promenading in white linen suits and white muslin frocks, as if they had come straight out of a laundry. We were terribly conspicuous in our dusty tweeds, particularly Peter in his English knickerbockers and stockings. A man came up to him and said: "I know, you are Churchill!" in perfect English. Peter explained (one got rather weary of explaining) that he was not Churchill, or Churchill's brother, but merely his cousin. The man said it was all the same, that in Russia there was the same appellation for brothers and sisters as for the children of brothers and sisters. He then announced excitedly that he was leaving for London in ten days' time. "I am a cabinet maker, and I have a business in the Tottenham Court Road, and I haven't seen my wife who is over there for seven years—I have had great difficulty in getting my papers, but they are all in order at last." He seemed so happy, not about his wife, but about England, as if it were the promised land. "Do you not know," I asked him, "that we have two million

unemployed?" His face fell, he had not heard it, was that really true? He melted away out of sight without another word. Towards evening we came back to our hotel, and on our way we passed the prison. One could see the faces looking out from behind the bars, and the prisoners were singing a song that I had heard on the stage of a Russian theatre at Warsaw, the well-known song of the prisoners on their way to Siberia. It has a peculiar melody of haunting sadness. I adore the Russians when they sing, whether it is a church choir, the Red Army on the march, the Communist revolutionaries, fishermen in the dawn, or prisoners behind bars. It stirs me so, that I could live in Russia for the joy of hearing them sing. Peter and I stood still in front of the prison to listen, but quickly a sentry turned upon us with his bayonet and told us gruffly to move on. Still we lingered, but he grew more threatening. I suppose he thought we were trying to signal to the prisoners. He never could have guessed of course that we loved the singing.

The next day the President of the Ispolkom, a simple Russian workman, called upon us, and the hall porter of the hotel acted as interpreter.

The hall porter was not a Communist, and was much interested and amused at our conversation, which he discussed with me afterwards at great length. The President having greeted us as friends of Rakovsky, sent us with a comrade in a motor-car to see the shallow falls of the Dnieper, 30 miles away. This is where the river is immensely wide and quite unnavigable, and the Soviet Government has an ambitious plan to build a dam and establish a great electrical works. If in the next six years Russia has no defensive wars to fight, the Government promises to donate the money that has been set aside for defence and use it instead for the purpose of electrification. This proposed dam would render the river navigable from Kiev to the Black Sea.

The trip out to the falls was our first experience of the Russian steppes. The road was simply a dust track across the wide, undulating plain. There was not a tree or a bush to the horizon, and sometimes not a house in sight. The corn having been cut, the only varieties in the landscape were the long plantations of giant sunflowers, like great regiments facing the sun, or else the pleasantly green patches of waving maize. The dust track on the whole was rather even and good. Where it was not, one simply pioneered a new

way right or left of it. At one moment I asked Peter if he could estimate at what speed we were going: he answered, "Thirty;" a minute later, I asked again and he said, "Thirty-five." "And now?" "Forty." "And now?" "Anything!" We seemed to be going at breakneck speed, but it was like motoring over the desert, one could not come to any harm. Eventually we reached the river, left our motor and climbed among the rocks down by the water's edge. There was an inscription on one of them to the effect that Prince Igor was killed there whilst fighting the Pechenegrins. This Prince Igor is not really a fantasy of the Russian ballet, but a romantic figure who actually lived. The Pechenegrins, so far as I could learn, were the natives of the land. It was as though Prince Igor were an Englishman who died fighting the Red Indians on American soil.

On our return from the river expedition the President of the Ispolkom took us himself to the great iron foundry outside the town where he had been a workman until he was elected to the Soviet. In Imperial days this foundry employed about 30,000 men. To-day it was employing 12,000. Eight blast furnaces were in working order, five being used for making iron and three

for manganese steel. We were received by the director, a workman, and by three or four engineers, one of whom used to be the director before the Revolution. These engineers were obviously bourgeois, and they spoke French. From them and from the President we got the two different viewpoints. The President explained that the Soviet Government was obliged to make use of the services of the bourgeois engineers until such time as the Communist engineers should have graduated from the Universities. That, in order to induce the bourgeois engineers to give their services, the Government had to pay them quite abnormally high wages. (One had to hear, however, what the bourgeois engineers said concerning the wage.) The technique of an iron foundry is not very familiar to me, but having been all over a steel mill in Pittsburg I was able to draw a certain comparison. The Russian mill had no modern machinery. Many things were being done by Russian workmen that in Pittsburg is being done by machines. The Russian worker was subjected to the most terrible dangers; literally he seemed to be playing with fire. Incidentally many worked in grass-woven moccasins, and when these took fire they merely stamped out

the sparks on the burning floor. Sixty per cent. of pre-war production was being turned out and the engineers said it would be useless to produce more, as there was no demand. I asked whether on the whole the worker had benefited by the Revolution. The answer was from the bourgeois engineer:

"Wages are lower, but work conditions are better. In place of the twelve-hour day of Czarist Russia is now the eight-hour day, and a workman has an infinity of privileges. Whatever preference there is, the workman gets it."

I asked someone in our group if he was a Communist, and he answered solemnly: "No—I am not a religious man." Seeing my surprise, he explained: "Communism is a religion, and I gave up being religious when I was sixteen."

If one wished to write an exciting book of adventure, one would write the modern history of "Catherine's town," explaining the reason of its ruins. All is ruin in Ekaterinoslav, except just the main street, and even that ends in a garden of weeds. The house in which the great Catherine used to visit her lover, the governor of the city, is looted of every mortal thing except ts crystal chandeliers, the glitter of which can

still be seen through the broken windows. Everywhere for miles outside the town there are ruins, ruins, ruins. The reason could be written in volumes, it can also be told in a nutshell. 1917 to 1921 contains the story.

First comes the tale of the Russian Revolution, followed by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk and the consequent occupation of the town by the Germans. Then the evacuation of the Germans and the occupation of the town by a gang of bandits under the leadership of Machno, a self-proclaimed anarchist individualist. Early in 1919 another bandit General, called Grigorieff, fired on the town, and his forces were dispersed by the arrival of Denikin. Whilst Denikin was in occupation, Machno returned and drove Denikin out. Denikin then returned with a larger army and drove out Machno. In 1920 the Bolsheviks appeared and Machno joined them in a combined effort to drive out Denikin. This accomplished, Machno then turned against the Bolsheviks. He accepted large sums of money and quantities of jewels from the Mennonites, or German Colonists, to fight Bolshevism. He joined with the Bolsheviks one day and fought against them the next. It was not until 1921 that the Bolsheviks managed finally to defeat Machno, who fled for

refuge to Poland. Everybody, everywhere, told us about Machno. Nobody ever blamed Denikin or the Bolsheviks, or the Germans for the looting, the burning, the blowing up. It was all attributed to Machno.

"Did England know what we were going through? Did they hear in England about Machno?" people asked again and again. Alas! no; in England people only heard about the Bolsheviks—but for the Russian generations of the future Machno's name is a legend that will live.

CHAPTER XII

THE STILLNESS OF THE STEPPES

We were on the point of leaving Ekaterinoslav for Alexandrovsk, Satanella was at the door and the street crowd was overflowing into the hotel lobby. The Red policeman and the manager were powerless to drive them out. As I was paying my hotel bill, a distracted and weeping woman threw herself upon me. She sobbed in French: "I have tried for three years to leave this country and get back to France—help me." After trying to calm her, I learned that she inhabited some small remote village (why, it was not quite clear) and her brother in France had sent her a perfectly good French passport, but it seemed to be nobody's business in Russia to give her the necessary papers for leaving the country. She had been to Kharkov in vain. They told her to go to Moscow, but she had not the money. "Why," she asked, "are you free to come here and go where you will?"

I took a rather unpardonable pride in pointing

out that the British had recognised Russia, and that we had a representative in Moscow and that France had not.[1] The poor lady for the first time began to have a glimmering of the capriciousness of politics. We promised to do all in our power to help her, and got a friend to write in Russian to the President of the Ekaterinoslav Soviet, begging that he would see to it that she received the necessary papers and his permission to leave the province. I advised the lady to apply to the Polish Consul in Kharkov for a Polish visa, and recommended her to trust to the efficiency of her own Consul in Warsaw to get her back from there to France. We shall unfortunately never know whether she succeeded in getting away or not.

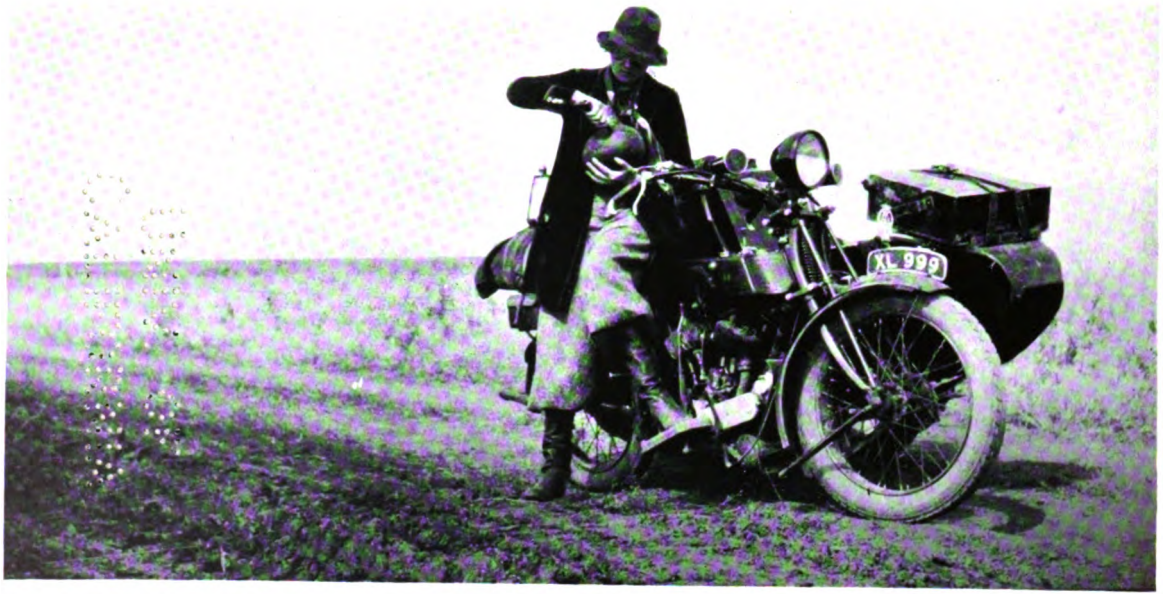
The road to Alexandrovsk was simply a dust track across unending, undulating steppes. We saw no railway, and we finally left even the telegraph posts. It seemed very desolate and lonely. The children, who lived here and there in little straw huts and guarded the crops, ran to see us go by, but even they were very few and far between. Beautiful birds flew across our

[1] Doubtless the French lady, and not ourselves, would be the privileged in Russia to-day! (November 1924.)

path, hoopoes and black-and-white striped birds whose plumage had a futurist look. Red and green grasshoppers jumped onto us, and the air was full of the sound of crickets. We found we could go a whole day without food, and with just one big water-melon between us which served as food and drink. It was too hot and dusty to eat anything else. Our faces and hands were black with the powdery dust from the rich dark earth. We looked as if we had been down a coal-mine; it penetrated even through our clothes.

It was my first experience of what might almost be called desert, for it was certainly a desert from the point of view of stillness and loneliness, even if it was not as regards vegetation. There were heaps of wild flowers, and a mauve mist of statice and a grey haze of sage.

It was dusk when we came into Alexandrovsk, and a policeman whom we stopped to consult, recommended an hotel to us. It happened that a much larger and more impressive-looking hotel stood facing it, and while we stood still in the middle of the wide street, hesitating in our selection, both proprietors ran out to us from right and left. I thought that before deciding on the policeman's recommendation I would go



AUTHOR CARVING A WATER-MELON FOR THE MID-DAY MEAL IN THE STEPPES.

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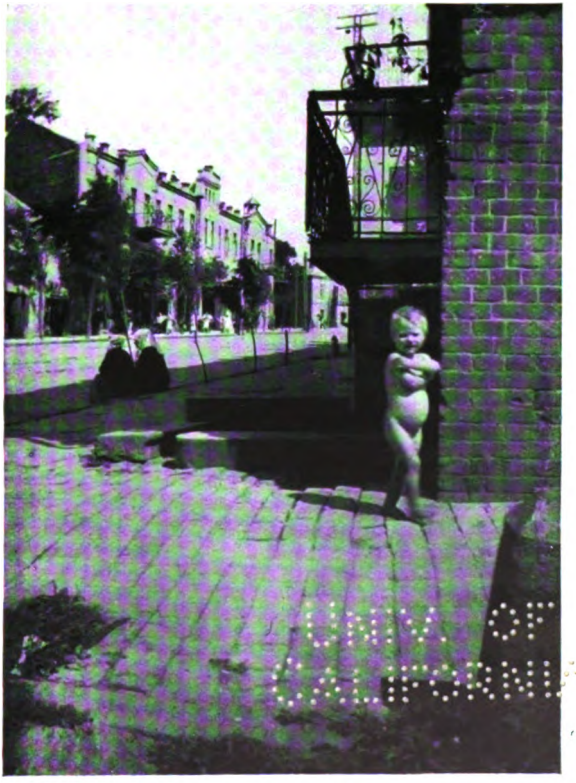
in and inspect the more important-looking building. Its stained, bare mattresses, however, revolted me. The proprietor informed me that he could provide bed linen, and that the beds would look all right once made up! I told him I would decide after I had been opposite. He evidently realised that "opposite" would win me, for he ceased to take any further interest, and the other proprietor received me in triumph! The policeman was right, as indeed policemen seemed to be whenever we consulted them. At the Bungalow Hotel we found clean beds and cold baths, but unfortunately we were obliged to keep our windows closed all night because we were level with the street. Meanwhile our arrival had caused a great stir, and the windows opposite were full of people looking through into ours. Nor could one go out into the corridor without meeting people who said they desired to talk with us! After supper, we received a visit from an English-speaking Jew who had lived in the Tottenham Court Road. He brought with him an American who could not speak a word of Russian, although he had been in Russia two years and was working in a factory. Two other men accompanied them, brothers, of whom one spoke only Russian, but the other was learning

English. It is curious how quickly and unconsciously one imbibes the modern Russian spirit, for when the man who was learning English told us that he wished to go to the United States to "look around," and most emphatically not to work, we were unsparing in our contempt. What right had he to go to America to "look around?" we asked him. No wonder he could not get a visa; why should America give him one? His retort was the obvious, "But you yourselves are here looking round"! To which we readily replied, "We are journalists—very hard-working journalists!" for indeed we were "working" our way across Europe!

The American was a great, big, gentle, well-mannered fellow, more Irish in his character than American, who had slipped comfortably into the Russian "nichevo" attitude towards life. He was not a Bolshevik, but he was interested in the rapid "pick-up" of the country. He kept telling me how marvellous this year was compared with last. He had come to Russia because he had heard that engineers were needed, and he wished to stay on for another year to watch the development.

The factory in which he worked was turning out modern agricultural implements, especially

THE WORK OF MACHNO AT ALEXANDROVSK.



A STREET IN ALEXANDROVSK.

the McCormick binder, of which they had an immediate order for eight thousand, as well as an order for eight thousand Russian binders. The Government controls the price, so that they are reasonably accessible to the peasant, and they were being carried off on the railway to various points of distribution as quickly as they could be turned out.

Here again we heard about the anarchist Machno—all the ruins of Alexandrovsk were attributed to him. The bridge across the river had been cut in the middle, and the two sides hung down into the ravine—the work of Machno.

The next morning before starting, Peter went to the bank to change some English money, and someone, seeing the English pound-note with the King's head on it, asked if it was the portrait of MacDonald. Peter tried to explain that we have a king called George. The stranger's face assumed a look of comprehension, "Of course," he said, "Lloyd George." It seemed as if some people in Russia had forgotten that kings exist outside of story books.

CHAPTER XIII

FROM ALEXANDROVSK TO THE SEA OF AZOV

WHILE we were loading up the machine outside the hotel door, a man in the crowd offered to direct us onto the best road for Melitopol (pronounced "tople"). He was a Mennonite, or German Colonist, an extremely intelligent fellow, who produced the most astonishingly good papers of recommendation as chauffeur from the American Relief Association. He told us not to go by the road we had planned, as we would be sure to get bogged in the deep, soft sand. We had already sampled something of the kind and took his advice gratefully, although it meant a détour. He was very anxious that we should visit some of the German villages, and offered to send us to some of his friends, but we pleaded lack of time, for we had no particular curiosity about the German Colonists.

It happened that the Moscow train had been

held up two days before and robbed, exactly here on the outskirts of Alexandrovsk, and I asked rather anxiously if the road was safe. Our hotel proprietor reassured us by the news that the robbers were Moscovites who had travelled from Moscow on the train, and that any way the clearest road to-day as a result would be the road out of Alexandrovsk. Obviously no marauder would linger on the scene of his attack. The proprietor then added a charming story to reassure me. It had once happened that some A.R.A.[1] men had been held up on the steppes, but when they produced their papers the bandits apologised and allowed them to proceed. Might not our papers in their different way be equally effective? Of that, however, I felt less sure. The bandits (if bandits still exist) belong to the class of "White" bourgeois Russian, for whom highway robbery is the only means of subsistence. To them a Rakovsky letter of recommendation might not be a recommendation to their mercy. The German chauffeur's directions were extraordinarily lucid, and we followed along miles of farm-cart tracks with complete success and without untoward incident. Again, the vast steppes, and the loneliness to the far horizon, and a hot

[1] American Relief Administration.

wind that blew our own dust ahead of us and nearly choked us.

At times an eddy of wind created a great spiral fountain of dust which danced across our path. In the dim distance were strange mirage effects. We seemed to be approaching a forest of high trees or a town of skyscrapers, but when we got near it was simply a clump of low bushes or a little village of one-storied houses, mostly in ruins. We passed through several of these villages, full of empty walls or mounds of bricks where houses had been razed to the ground. In the midst of this desolation we passed a church, completely unharmed, that stood in lonely state a silent witness of the tales that will never be told. The stillness of the plain in wilder places seemed less desolate than the ruined villages.

Far away where no human habitation was in view, our dust track led us down into a little hollow where a clear spring flowed out from the chalk rock. The place was full of eagles that had come there to drink, and at our approach they rose into the air and circled over our heads. In one village we had to cross a stream, and got bogged in the effort to climb up the bank on the opposite side. We signalled to an old man working near by to come and help us. He

A CHURCH IN THE MIDDLE OF THE UKRAINIAN STEPPES.

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seemed not in the least surprised; one would have imagined that he lived on a highway where motor bicycles got bogged daily. He followed us to the stream, and I assured him that we needed a "loshad" (horse). He shrugged his shoulders and said something about "loshads" that I did not understand. In another minute he was into the water, knee-deep in black mud, and had lifted the full weight of the sidecar!

At a village called Burchatsk we finally joined the railway, but simultaneously there ceased to be any sign of a road. We crossed the line and Peter asked, in the two words of Ukrainian that he had carefully learnt for such an occasion: "Deh dorohah Melitopol?" The guard pointed back across the line. Peter protested in dumb language that we had just come that way and there wasn't any "dorohah." Finally the guard patiently crossed the rails with us, and then stooped down and patted two scarcely visible tracks. We accepted his definition of a road and continued on our way straight on across the grassy space before us. A little farther on and we realised what had happened. The carter drives his chariot where he wills. Another follows, and another, till a way develops. In the winter this grows impassable, and some bright spirit

strikes out afresh (probably in the spring) to right or left. After two or three years of this, the road becomes anything up to 100 yards broad, and the owner of the cornfield so encroached upon comes along and ploughs the whole thing over. Occasionally he appears to get thoroughly fed up and digs transverse trenches as well! The road then restarts as before. At Burchatsk it was just restarting, but a half mile farther we found a going concern, lovely smooth, soft surface, and we bowled along merrily at 20 to 25 miles an hour.

Our road then followed along the side of the railway over perfectly flat land, mile after mile, until sunset. There was a grim monotony of railway guard-houses by the side of the line about every 2 versts. They were all built on the same design, and each one had a bush and a tree. These little houses seemed to add to, rather than dispel, the desperate monotony. I was reminded of a short story by Gorky, about the guard of a small railway station in the middle of the steppes, for whom the only connection with the world came twice a day, with the train full of passengers—that never stopped at his station!

We reached Melitopol just at dusk. The

familiar Red policeman, whom we had proved to be always helpful, directed us to the "Louise Hotel." We paused farther on in the town at a street corner to ascertain exactly where the "Louise" was to be found. We were apparently only a stone's throw from it, and as we moved on I could hear, above the sound of the machine, the rush of footsteps. The whole street full of people who promenade in the cool of the evening had been moved by a unanimous decision to look at us. In front of the Hotel Louise a policeman with slung rifle tried to disperse them. He blew his whistle repeatedly, but no one took the slightest notice. Perhaps they regarded policemen as amiable beings, as we did! This one, however, fired a shot over their heads—the effect was magical; we found ourselves all of a sudden very nearly alone.

Although Melitopol is a smaller town than Alexandrovsk, the hotel was extremely good and had an excellent restaurant. People came in from the street and settled down in parties of half circles and pretended they were not watching us. Doubtless the "Churchill" story was in every paper, and we were unmistakable in a land where there are no strangers!

Here, as in nearly all the hotels, we were obliged

to share the same room. The rooms were usually the size of ball-rooms, with beds at the extreme opposite ends. Still, we always protested that we wanted small single rooms. "I am with my brother, not my husband!" I would explain, but it made no difference, they always answered: "Nichevo" — always, always the eternal: "Nichevo! What do you want two rooms for?" The Russian mind cannot grasp the idea of privacy. It seems to be the one thing that one is powerless to buy!

The next morning, as we were leaving, a man in the crowd called to us:

"You from England?"

"Yes—London."

"So am I," said he. Peter drew a bolt at a venture and said: "I know—Tottenham Court Road."

"You are just right," replied the man; he was a master cutter who had worked for Peter Robinson.

Our road from Melitopol ran for 58 miles to Novo Alexievka along the railway. It was an exact replica of the previous days' run from Burchatsk. The steppe was dead flat, there were not even any undulations. The railway ran dead straight. The sun was intensely hot, there was

not a bush for miles except the one that grew every 2 versts next to the railway guard-house. Occasional deep sand drifts slowed us down sometimes to 5 miles an hour. The wind still accompanied us, going about the same pace, so we had no cooling air. The machine's cylinders got fearfully hot, and the oil ran as thin as ink. My arms in a thin, short-sleeved shirt burned and swelled and blistered. About half-way we threw ourselves down in the meagre shadow of a railway guard's bush. We spread out a rug and slept exhaustedly. Nobody bothered about us except the little girl whose business it was to see that the chickens did not stray onto the line when the train went by, and she seemed to think it her duty to guard us in return for some slabs of chocolate! The bush shadow unfortunately was the favourite place of the chickens, and when we awoke there were distinct evidences of fleas. "Tout se paye," as the French say, and we paid painfully for that peaceful sleep!

After Novo Alexievka we followed a branch line that went off at right angles to a little place called Genichesk, on the Sea of Azov. It was not strictly on our Crimean route, but we deviated because it was a great excitement to get to a sea

at last, after our weeks of inland travel. We reached this village in the evening, and stopped in the main street to ask for a "Gostinitza" (hotel), only to be told there was no such thing. We were directed, however, to the cottage of an old lady who rented rooms. It looked primitive, but the bed had an enormous pillow with a clean lace cover, and a white bedspread, so we decided to remain. Peter was appointed a sofa in a room which opened off mine, and his room opened off a semi-public parlour which was let out as a bedroom to a strange man, and which itself opened off the general eating-room! There was no pretence at sanitation, but by a miracle there were no bugs! When I expressed an earnest necessity to wash, a little peasant girl struggled into my room with a large wooden pig-trough as large as herself. This she filled with water and indicated that she was prepared to wash me. When she realised that I insisted upon washing myself without her help she went away quite dejectedly. The daughters of the house were fearfully excited by our arrival. One was a Communist (or said she was!), but the other, whose husband had been a White officer shot by the Reds, was on the contrary very anti-Communist. (It was probably

EVENING : THE CHURCH AT GENICHESK.

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very convenient to have a Communist in the family !)

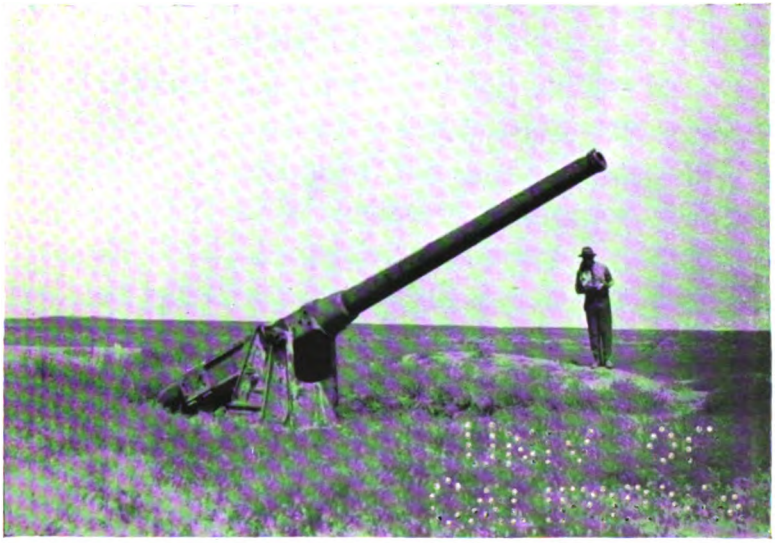
Whatever Genichesk may have been in the past, we found it almost a dead place. There were great white flats where the salt was drying, but no ships were there to take it away. The people appeared sleepy and idle. Almost the only vibration was from the deep-toned church bells at sunset. The church, which was just opposite our cottage, was filled with people. They overflowed into the doorway and kneeled down on the steps to pray, although it was a weekday evening.

CHAPTER XIV

INTO THE CRIMEA

AFTER the burning days across the Ukrainian steppes the road from Genichesk to Simferopol seemed exciting in its variety. We left the edge of the shallow Sea of Azov and passed over a causeway that connects the Crimea with the mainland. This causeway crosses the Sivash, otherwise known as the Putrid Sea. In reality it is a stagnant lake, 93 miles long, that appears to be drying up. To judge by the smell of the mudflats under the burning sun, it certainly justified its English appellation. Fortunately we only had to cross its narrow breadth, which is about 2 miles. On the peninsula, which is again flat as the steppes, we passed by the famous Perekop line of which some deserted earthworks still remained, and two great naval guns were silhouetted defiantly against the sky. These derelicts were left by General Wrangel, who held this line for about fifteen months. It cost the

OUR FIRST TARTAR FRIENDS.



LEFT BEHIND BY GENERAL WRANGEL! A NAVAL GUN ON THE DESOLATE BATTLEFIELD OF PERIKOP.

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Reds something like 20,000 in dead to drive him out.

When one talked with the Crimean people, one realised how impossible it was for the Whites to hold even the Crimea, for the bourgeois people and the non-Bolsheviks were against him, and he was subject to constant acts of sabotage behind his lines. The tragedy for Wrangel, as for all the interventionists, was their utter misapprehension concerning the attitude of the Russian masses towards the old régime.

Close by the Wrangel guns, in a cloud of dust, we were confronted on the narrow track by a line of carts, some drawn by oxen and others by camels. I leapt out of the sidecar and gestured to the camel-driver to stop. Conversation was more difficult than ever, for even our few words of "Russki" and of "Ukrainski" were now obsolete, and we knew not a single word of "Tartarski." They seemed to understand, however, that there are no camels in everyday English life, and considered it was quite natural we should wish to photograph them. With great effort we wrote down phonetically their names and addresses and promised to send them copies. In return, with a courteous gesture, they presented us with all we needed of water-melons, shook us

warmly by the hand and continued on their dusty way.

From this time on until the end of the day we travelled towards the mountains, which emerged more and more clearly out of the mist. It was the first time that any mountains had come in sight since we left Silesia. The Crimean villages that we passed through seemed to be rather untidily and loosely knit together, and a great, wide, unmetalled road divided each in half. These roads were deep in dust that was worse than the finest seashore sand, and several times we were brought to a dead standstill. We skidded and floundered about in this dust as if it had been mud, and once we were obliged to beat a retreat and make a great détour else we should never have got through at all.

In the evening we came to Simferopol, a Tartar town in the foothills, which has been the capital ever since the Russians conquered the Crimea in the eighteenth century. We were terribly tired when we arrived. My arms were raw with sunburn blisters, my hair was stiff with dust, my eyes aching from the glare, my head throbbing with the sound and the heat of the engine. I don't know how Peter was feeling, but no doubt he felt worse. The crowd, however, expected us

to be full of conversation. We were subjected to the usual string of questions :

" Where have you come from ? Why have you come ? What do you think of Russia ? How do you find our roads ? How long have you been here ? What does such a machine cost ? Are you Communists ? How is your health ? "

It was a lady who asked Peter this latter question and said that she and her husband would like to come and call upon us. What time would suit us ? Peter was rather snappy and said he wanted first to wash and then to eat. There was no policeman in Simferopol to help to keep the crowd clear of the machine. It was with the greatest difficulty that we were able to get elbow room to undo the straps of our luggage. I struggled back and forth to the hotel lobby with things ; there was no porter or anyone to assist us. Suddenly a little man seized me by the arm and said in broken English that he would see to everything for us if we would confide ourselves to his care. He kept begging me to follow him, and I got quite cross : " Can't you see that I must unload the luggage—and my brother wants to know where there's a garage ? " There was no garage, but if we could get the motor

bicycle up onto the pavement we could roll her into a passage-way adjoining the hotel, and the doors at each end would then be locked.

Someone threw down an old wooden door to bridge from the street to the pavement. The crowd would not give Peter room to manœuvre and one wheel went over the edge, and then the door cracked. The crowd, however, pushed Satanella up onto the sidewalk. The importunate one again urged us to place ourselves in his hands.

"I am an Englishman," he explained, "and I am an anarchist, and I was sent out of England in 1917—follow me!"

I don't know if we followed him or if he followed us. He certainly would not leave us. We were given a perfectly good gigantic room with two beds in it, although little else. Complete confusion seemed to reign; there were no servants, and the anarchist took me for a long walk to show me where one could draw water for oneself. Moreover, in spite of my protest, he insisted on carrying the full water-jug back to my room for me. I felt that the Russian comrades (for surely they were Communists!) who stood in groups in the corridor and watched us go by must think me a fool for not being able to carry my own water-jug. The anarchist, however, was adamant on

the subject, and said loudly (and as I thought proudly), "How could I let you—you forget I am an Englishman." I certainly had forgotten it. I thought he was a Polish Jew.

He showed me the small room, with two beds, in which he lived with his "sweetheart," as he called her, and another woman with a child. "How can you live like that?" I asked.

"Oh, it's all right," he answered. But I no longer wondered why he prefered to hang about our room than about his. He asked if he might show us where to get supper, and whether his "sweetheart" might join us.

She was unmistakably a Polish Jewess, and although she could speak German she preferred to be silent. She sat rigidly while we ate, refused to eat with us and snubbed her lover's head off whenever he spoke to her in subdued and rapid Yiddish.

"She is on the stage," he told us.

"Really?" and I tried to take a kindly interest. "Is she a very clever actress?" for indeed she might have been a genius, those Polish Jewesses sometimes are.

"No, she is very bad," he replied, and smiled at her ingratiatingly as if to atone, but she,

fortunately, had not understood. He talked familiarly of England, as one reared in the Tottenham Court Road. He used to like London, he said, but now he preferred Russia and never meant to go away.

"But as an anarchist, how do you fit in?" I asked.

"Oh, that doesn't matter—of course I'm an anarchist, an individualist anarchist."

"I know," I interrupted, "like the great Machno, who has wrecked most of the Russia we've come through."

He ignored my reference and added: "This is the country of the future in which to make money."

He took two roubles off us to go and buy our breakfast at the market. He always went to the market, so he said, at seven every morning. I suppose he marketed for his silent lady love and for the woman with the child; it was probably his absence in the market that enabled them to get up and dress in privacy! They then cooked the breakfast on his return, and all ate it in the same room. Well, for two roubles he bought us 10 eggs, 2 lb. of butter, an enormous loaf of brown bread, a melon, some grapes, peaches and tomatoes, sugar, tea and

lemon. Impossible to eat it all, but he also demanded 20 kopecks more.

He was terribly anxious to give me an interview for an American paper on "How the Jewish actors live in Russia." He said it would be of great interest to the Jews in New York. I evaded it, however, thinking that I had already seen enough, and we managed to slink out of the hotel without his accompanying us.

We were on our way to the bank to cash our letters of credit when a couple of men in the street introduced themselves as the President and Secretary of the Moscow Motor Club. They spoke perfect English and accompanied us first to the bank, where we cashed our money in less time and with less formality than in any other foreign country, and thence to the Ispolkom, where we introduced ourselves to the President of the Soviet. The President of the Soviet was a simple Tartar workman, with an extremely interesting face, but he took little interest in us; he amiably bowed acknowledgment of our existence, admitted there was nothing of interest to see in Simferopol, and advised us (with Tartar pride) to visit Bakhchi-Sarai, the ancient capital of Tartary, on our way to Yalta. The President of the Motor Club did the rest for us. He rescued Satanella

from the passage-way and took her to the State garage to be cleaned and overhauled. He showed us the town and took us to the market-place, where fruits of all kinds, some of them fantastically new to us, were piled up like a vision of the promised land. He then told us that it was his wife who had spoken to us the night before in the crowd and who had tried to appoint a meeting hour for us with her husband. But she had drawn a blank and gone home to report that we seemed rather cross and tired. The Motor Club, I must say, were hospitality itself; they helped us considerably on our way, and would not allow us to pay anything to the workers who overhauled the machine and ground in the valves (and discovered a cracked cylinder!). They took an intense interest in all the details of our trip, and wrote it all down for the newspapers, Moscow having telegraphed that they wanted details.

We left the following morning on tiptoe, so to speak, in order not to arouse our dormant anarchist.

CHAPTER XV

THROUGH BAKHCHI-SARAI TO YALTA

Our friends of the Motor Club preceded us in a motor out of the town, and then having put us on the right road wished us God-speed and abandoned us to our journey. Our goal was Yalta, on the Black Sea, but we took a round-about way in order to visit Bakhchi-Sarai, the ancient capital of Tartary, and the residence of the Khans from the fifteenth century until 1783.

This enchanting oriental village was hemmed in by arid hills covered with giant glacier boulders and rocky cliffs. The main street consisted of small wooden houses and open shops that resembled the booths of an oriental bazaar. The silhouette of the town was pierced with minarets. One wondered if this was still Europe.

The Khan Sarai, or Palace of the Khans, all built of wood and painted in fantastic designs, is a romantic and lovely building in a courtyard with gardens and fountains. The Palace had been restored, but the miracle was that it still

existed at all. With noisy disrespect our motor bicycle, with its accompanying trail of dust, rattled through the archway into the Palace precincts. There was a rush of little tattered Tartars towards us, and an aged guardian, who seemed to have been asleep for some years, blinked and remained speechless. Suddenly from out of the crowd a man came up to Peter and queried: "Churchill?" We could not explain, so we nodded and let it be. A few minutes later the Chief of the Military Police arrived with a German interpreter and formally invited us to luncheon in the private garden of the Khan's Palace. How could we resist, although it meant remaining all night? But unless we pushed on immediately we could not reach Yalta before dark. Our host assured us that a room would be found for us in the village. Meanwhile a table was set on the stone pavement under the cypress-trees, and there was a continual stream of people across the garden bearing dishes of food. Lunch started with a local liqueur in champagne-glasses, and progressed through port and white wine to beer. We nearly died of over-eating, but the last dish of all was to my mind the most irresistible: pastry cakes soaked in honey, a Tartar speciality. And such pastry!

ENTRANCE TO THE PALACE OF THE TARTAR KHANS AT BAKHCHI-SARAI.

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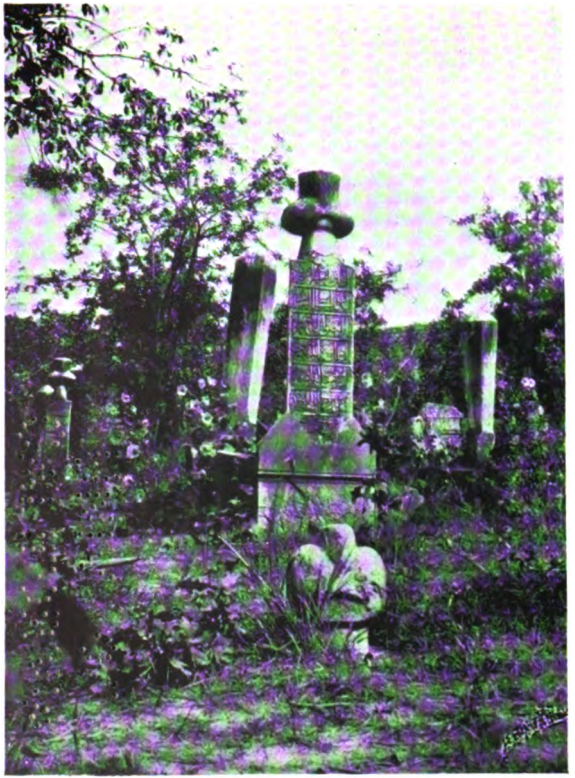
No Belgian or Austrian patisserie ever produced anything to compare.

While this feast was in progress our host, the interpreter and the guide joined us, and five Tartars made music for us on violins, flute, drum, tambourine and cymbals. It sounded like a mixture of Debussy and a Scotch reel, in fact I shall never again hear bagpipes without thinking of the Tartars. Two others danced for us. One of them in particular, his toes peering through his shoes, performed Tartar and Caucasian step-dances in a way that would have drawn crowds to the Coliseum. He did the knife dance with a fierce dignity and the assurance of one who might have been dressed in the raiment of a prince.

It is marvellous to reflect how the Tartar Khans for centuries led expeditions against Russia. We followed the trail of their depradations from Kiev, and even Poland. There is a romance concerning the last of the Khans, and the people in the little town of Bakhchi-Sarai still talked of the girl who was carried off by the Tartar chieftain. She was no less a person than Countess Maria Potocka, the daughter of the rich and powerful Potocki family, who owned immense property in Poland and Russia. Maria was made

prisoner and carried off to the Palace in far-off Crimea. Beautiful painted rooms were placed at her disposal, for the Khan adored his Christian prisoner, but she was either very angry or very bored, and she died of weeping. In the inner courtyard there is a fountain especially designed as a memorial to Maria Potocka. It is called the "weeping fountain." The water drips sadly from one little shell into a lower one, all down the side of a wall. Even now it is still dripping unending tears for Maria. Next to the Palace Mosque is the burial place of the Khans, but Maria is buried in the little Christian cemetery across the way.

When the feast was over, that is to say, when we were replete and the musicians were exhausted, we begged leave to see our rooms. Our host demurred. "The room is not quite ready, it is being furnished," he said. Accordingly we accepted the invitation of a youth who offered to show us a ruined "cave-city" in the hills. This youth was a "White" (we had become experts at detecting them almost on sight!); his father had been shot because he was a White Guard, which means of course a counter-revolutionary. He spoke French rather badly, but sufficiently well to be entertaining. He took us



BURIAL-PLACE OF THE KHANS OF TARTARY AT BAKHCHI-SARAI.

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THE "WEEPING FOUNTAIN" IN A COURTYARD OF THE KHAN'S PALACE.

Memorial to Maria Potocka.

for a 5-mile uphill walk to see the ruined town of Tchufut-Kale, an ancient Jewish fortress, that stood high up above the valley of "Jehosophat." It looked like a stronghold of cave-dwellers. Some of the caves in the rocks were two and three tiered. There seemed to be very little information available about its history, except that the people belonged to a tribe called "Karaïtes." These left Judea at the captivity and therefore, having taken no part in the crucifixion, were given special privileges by the Imperial Russian Government and were at all times exempt from persecution.

Why they deserted this cave-town in the middle of the nineteenth century does not seem quite clear, but perhaps they thought it was time to modernise themselves!

On our return, after dark, to our Tartar town we found that a room had been arranged for us in the local inn and a soldier guarded the door. This one-storied inn was built round a big courtyard that was roofed in by vines. There was a fountain with perpetual running water, and little tables under the vines where people sat in groups drinking. An arc light having semblance to a sham moon cast weird lights and shadows. Two tame black sheep and two fat grey geese came

and importuned us for food. The black grape bunches hung down from their trellis within easy reach. An enchanting place almost too romantic to be real. Our "furnished" room contained two plank beds and a table, but on the plank beds there were straw mattresses, and the great big pillows had covers of fine linen and real lace.

In the morning a policeman was waiting to greet us. He explained in a few words and signs that he had ordered a motor bicycle to escort us to Yalta. This seemed greatly to annoy Peter. He had, he said, found his own way across Europe and he resented at this stage a semblance of official protection, in a country that had already proved itself so friendly. Happily the policeman did not understand, and I tried to placate Peter: "Remember, you are supposed to be Winston!" I reminded him. "Perhaps this is their method of being courteous to him."

In the street the motor bicycle and sidecar were waiting for us to start. The policeman, with his red cap and slung rifle, got into it, a third man sat pillion behind the driver. It looked terribly business-like. Peter said we looked fools being escorted, but I suggested that possibly at last there really were bandits up in the mountain

THE CAVE-CITY.

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passes. All this newspaper publicity might have rallied the bandits, for surely "Lord Churchill" must be worth holding up!

We could have spared ourselves our fruitless speculation. Hardly 2 versts outside the town, the official machine stopped. We looked back; the driver was examining the wheel. We never saw them more!

What a road over the mountains to Yalta! We climbed and we climbed back and forth, higher and higher, until the air grew cold and the vegetation grew less and less and finally ceased altogether. These were the Yaila Mountains that stretch across from the Caucasus. At 5,000 feet we found the barren summit, and at Aï-Petri we came suddenly and dramatically in sight of the Black Sea and a wonderful view of the coast below. A motor, a carriage and a small group of mountaineers were assembled at this point. People spoke to us in perfect English, French and German. We were cross-questioned *ad infinitum*. Strange, indeed, it seemed to them on that desolate height, to find people who said they had come from London! And why had we come? What was our mission? We had no mission, we had come for the sport of it! How

English of us! Only the English did such things!

"I could not love the English if they were not just a little mad!" said a lady who taught chemistry in the University of Petrograd. They questioned us with eager interest. They were all cultured people who had been cut off overlong from the outside world. They wanted to know in seven minutes what had been happening in Europe for seven years. They wondered if we were the forerunners of a foreign inrush into Russia. Some day the world would open up to Russia, and Russia to the world. Was this the beginning?

"There is our Riviera. Is it not beautiful?" They pointed towards the distant coast with its white turreted villas and palaces, the mass of cypress-trees and vine-lands. The great background of purple mountain made Italy and France seem rather banal by comparison. "You can live here quite normally as in other countries; you need no official friends, no Communist protection," they shouted to us, as our Satanella silently started off down the hill without the throb of engines, along a road that appeared and disappeared in zigzags through the trees to sun-bathed Yalta below.

THE FRANZIA RESTAURANT AT YALTA.

"SATANELLA" ON THE ROAD FROM AÏ-PETRI DOWN TO YALTA.

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CHAPTER XVI

THE CRIMEAN RIVIERA

At Yalta we stayed at the Hotel Franzia, the Motor Club having given us a letter to the Communist manager. She had learnt English in America and was friendly and helpful. The Franzia Restaurant was across the road, built over the water on log piles like a pier. This seemed to be the chic eating-place, and at certain hours the band played. The head manager of the restaurant solemnly made us a speech of welcome, in return for which we asked him to sit down and join us. He spoke French and we thought we might pick up some gossip from him. It is always amusing to find out peoples' politics, and usually those who were not Communists talked to us indiscreetly, taking for granted that we also were not Communist. I never could make out what there was in our appearance to create such an impression.

The restaurant manager turned out to be not a

Russian at all, but a Greek who had transformed his name from Serafimidis into Serafimoff. But as Greece had recently recognised the Soviet Republic, he was only awaiting the arrival of the Greek Consul to return to the Greek form of his name and claim Greek citizenship and protection. It appeared that he was a trader in some small inland town, and that the local Soviet of that town had decided that he traded in a manner contrary to Soviet laws. His arrest was ordered, but (it is not so easy to catch a wily Greek) his friends got wind of it and warned him, with the result that he slipped away.

"Won't they pursue you here?" I asked.

Apparently not. One provincial Soviet was not concerned in the affairs of its neighbour. Mr. Serafimoff had escaped, and although he was only a few hours away from his home he was safe. He would return in a few weeks "when the affair had blown over." Meanwhile, he was still trading! There was nothing he did not know about tobacco. He talked to us with amazing frankness, finding us interested. He allowed himself to tell us just what he thought about Russians. They were to his mind everything that was execrable—brutal, dirty, stupid.

"Why don't you go back to Greece?" I asked him.

"Greece? Oh, never!" He had no use for Greece; there was nothing to be done in Greece. "Russia is the country to make money in," he said.

"I suppose it is because of the people's stupidity that you are able to make money out of them?"

He laughed, and admitted that was the reason: "The dirty brutes. The d——d fools," he added.

"Then you don't want to leave Russia?" I asked.

"Oh, no! It's a wonderful country for making money. In spite of this Soviet Government, there are fortunes to be made here."

I think something suddenly snapped inside me at that moment, it was probably my self-control, for I got rather red in the face and I said things in a rapid, passionate overflow. The Greek's eyes became rounder and more protruding; he seemed just for a moment rather taken aback, and then he exclaimed:

"But . . . Madame, you are Bolshevik!" as if the thing were unbelievable. Peter laughed, and we got up and left. I never ate again in the Franzia Restaurant.

The next day we started off on Satanella to explore the coast. As nothing in Russia is private, we ventured along the road past an empty Imperial sentry-box. A mile through vineyards brought us in sight of the Czar's great white Italian palace of Livadia. As the road up to it was barred to all except pedestrians, we pushed on, but very little farther a greystone palatial mansion blocked our way.

We paused, wondering where to go next, and beholding a gentleman in white pyjamas with arms full of melons and flowers, we asked him, in our best Russian: "Please, where are we?" The gentleman smiled, and answered us in English:

"This is a rest-house."

"A rest-house? For whom?"

"For you, if you like."

"But we are not Communists."

He smiled again.

"Neither am I. I am a banker. Anyone can come here. There are many professors and doctors, and Communists too. Allow me to ask at the office if there are any vacant rooms. We never see any foreigners, and there are many people who would be interested to talk with you."

The greystone building was the "Suiteski

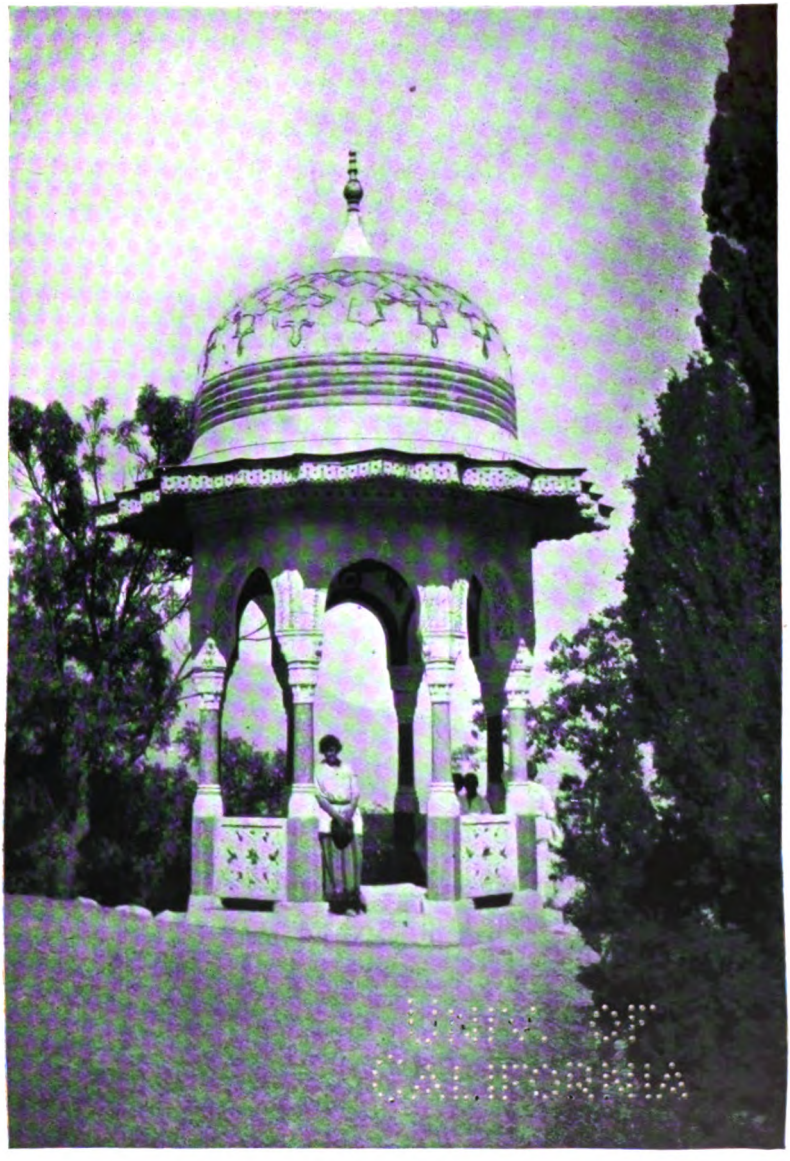
Dom," built for the Czar's ministers and the royal suite. It stood on a hill-side with miles of park sloping down to the sea. Alongside the house was a formal garden full of bedding-out plants, and an old gardener was watering them with a hose. The banker hurried off—still in his pyjamas—to the office, and settled everything. Perhaps it was the Rakovsky letter that secured for us the best apartment in the ministerial palace. Two bedrooms (with English chintz curtains), a bathroom (real plumbing from England), and a great stone loggia, shady and cool and full of the hot scent of cypress-trees. This, with food, and the whole of the Czar's park to play in, a sea-bathing beach included, for 8 roubles (which is the equivalent of £1) each a day. The maid-servant, who dated back to Imperial days, informed me that this particular apartment had belonged to Virbovna, the Empress's lady-in-waiting (whom the Empress refers to in her letters as Ania. It was "Ania" who introduced Rasputin into the Imperial family). The ministers had the floor above, but Virbovna's apartment had its own private front door.

Our fellow *pensionnaires* were certainly varied in type. One hundred of us lunched and dined in the big dining-room, at the long, narrow tables.

People came to meals in a variety of costumes, or without any! Our friend the banker, like many others, invariably wore pyjamas. There was a Red Army general in a striped bathing suit, and an admiral in a pair of trousers only, his body burnt the colour of bronze.

It was amusing to observe the group movements. For instance, the bourgeois and the Communists kept themselves separate, but the bourgeoisie were sub-divided. There were the intelligentsia, such as our friendly banker and his wife, a woman doctor from Leningrad, and a very prosperous Moscow doctor, with grey hair and refined features, almost the exact double of the late George Wyndham. Then there were some rather frivolous people, newly rich, pretending to be poor, and some Jewish families referred to as N.E.P.'s (people who had made money under the New Economic Policy).

Most of the women wore Tartar dresses, which they bought at Yalta for 15 roubles (37s.). These dresses were woven in designs of yellow, red and orange on coarse white cotton, and their effect was very decorative. No shadow of present-day fashions darkened the sunny path of new Russia. Shoes without stockings were mostly worn, and a Tartar scarf of many colours tied



AUTHOR IN THE CZAR'S GARDEN AT LIVADIA.

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like a turban round the head. Stockings, being prohibitive in price, were boycotted. As for hats—such as one saw in the shop windows could only have made the wearer pitiable and grotesque. So long as the Russian woman was content to be decorative and simple she looked attractive and distinctive. And doubtless the Russian woman will continue along these lines so long as Russia is cut off from the outside world and shops are unable to produce temptations. The Communist women were fashionable, however, to a degree unknown even to themselves. They wore their hair shingled! When I told them that it was the "grand chic" and very expensive in Paris and London, they did not know whether to be rather pleased or very much annoyed. At all events they scored; for their hairdressers cut it extremely well and only charged 50 kopecks.

It was on the seashore that it was difficult to tell who was bourgeois and who Communist. Nature had burnt everybody the same, and everybody was nude. The woman's beach and the man's beach were separate, but each was alongside the other, and there was a mix-up where the boundary met.

I was asked why I did not take sunbaths. A sunbath is to lie naked on the hot shingle. In

time one grew rather self-conscious of one's bathing-dress!

There were beautiful girls who lay basking in the sun on rocks that stood high up out of the water. They looked like sculpture studies on granite pedestals.

For six days we enjoyed these conditions, and at night I used to lie out in my loggia, watching a harvest moon reflected like a golden column in the sea. The white Palace of Livadia, with its clumps of tall cypresses, looked like some fantastic whitened sepulchre.

Bands of youths used to come and sit on the marble seats in the shadows and sing folk-songs far into the night.

To write about the Russian Riviera of to-day and to describe it fully would fill a volume. One cannot in a short space describe all the palaces and all the rest-houses and all the people.

In every direction among the trees there were villas, Moorish and Italian palaces, English country houses, etc. These were especially well viewed from a boat along the coast.

For miles and miles there were grand ducal and princely residences in exquisite positions. Perpetually one asked the same question: "Who

did it belong to? What is it now?" And always the same answer: It belonged to Grand Duke so-and-so, and it is now a rest-house for workers, or a sanatorium. From every part of Russia people had come to the Crimea "to rest." Every palace, every villa, was a rest-house. Livadia was really a bourgeois *pension* for the rich, and not many people could afford it; but most of the palaces were for the workers and free of cost.

One day we went in search of our friend Baran from Kiev, the head of the professional unions, who had given us Kharax as his only address. I imagined that Kharax would be a village, but I found it engraved on the stone pillar of an imposing gateway. Kharax was the English château of the Grand Duke George Mikhailovitch, where the Empress Mother sought refuge from the Revolution, and it was from here that she went on board a British ship and escaped to England. The lodge-keeper, hearing I was English, told me about it rather sentimentally.

Kharax is now the rest-house of the Ukrainian workers' unions. We were shown all over the grounds and made to stay for supper and to a "movie" given in the garden afterwards. The garden was full of men, women and children,

playing games or lying about under the trees. The grounds were surprisingly well kept. There were no papers strewn about, apparently no flowers picked, no broken tree-branches (memories of Hampstead Heath, and of Epping Forest, and of Hampton Court on a Bank Holiday!). Nor were there any guardians with shrill whistles to frighten little children (memories of Central Park, New York!). How happy everybody seemed! Everywhere was the sound of song and laughter. Happiness was the dominant note of the Russian Riviera.

Most of these people, bourgeois and Communist alike, had never been able to get to the Crimea before. It was reserved in old days for the very rich and the favoured few. These came for perhaps one month in the year, and they made it impossible for the others. The Czar, who always arrived from Sevastopol by yacht, desired that Yalta should not become a popular resort, and for that reason there is no railway communication within 50 miles.

Crowds of people daily besieged the Palace of Livadia, and waited their turn to be taken in parties by a guide.

THE CZAR'S PALACE AT LIVADIA.

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I confess that it was with a feeling of unspeakable emotion that I surveyed the big playroom of the little Czarevitch. Models of yachts and steamboats lined the walls, and in a glass cupboard all mixed up with his toys was a framed photograph signed "Uncle Ernie." [1] Next to the boy's bedroom was the room of his sailor attendant, the man who had to carry him on his back when he was ill, and who was the very first to join the Revolution.

The rooms of the daughters were rather less individual and more like the Ritz Hotel. The bedroom of the Czarina had its characteristic big English double bed, in which the Imperial couple always slept together. One recalls the Empress's letters to the Czar on the occasions when he went off to review the troops at the front, and how she lamented her loneliness and the absence of his head upon the pillow at her side. Their room was full of rather banal religious pictures. I had to smile at the indignation of the guide, who pointed these out as an indictment against the Royal personalities: "What can you expect of people who have such things in their rooms? Imagine their mentality, think of the superstition, the stupidity, the melancholy." In England such

[1] Grand Duke of Hesse, brother of the Czarina.

pictures would have seemed to be a little in their favour.

I tried to discover from our bourgeois friends if they had a tinge of sorrow when they passed through these rooms so vibrant with tragedy. But I could not provoke them into any expression of regret: "We never knew him, we never saw him, we do not miss him," was all they ever said, and shrugged their shoulders.

Among the crowds who daily visited Livadia were thousands of State children, who ranged in age from four to fourteen. They were called "pioneers" or "little Lenins," whose parents were the victims of war and famine. These orphans had drifted down from the north when the cold weather set in, and the State had gathered them into schools where they were being trained as future Communists. There were said to be three millions of them in Russia. They had special privileges and their status in the public eye was very much that of our boy or girl scouts in England. They were astonishingly well developed by physical drill, and as they grew older they seemed to develop proud, self-reliant characters. They appeared to believe that Russia belonged to them, and the world to Russia!

Before leaving we motored out to the Imperial Acclimatisation Garden at Nikita, which was full of flowers and a marvellous collection of rare shrubs. It was some way off, over a bad road, but we found that several parties had driven out there and paid their few kopecks' entrance fee. The man who seemed to be really on the highway towards becoming a capitalist, was he who sold peaches and melons at the gate!

Beyond Nikita we came to Gurzuf, a typical Tartar village, where we had either to buy petrol or remain stranded.

Our demand for "benzine" was promptly replied to by a man in the crowd who offered it to us for 11 kopecks a pound. We had bought all he had, and we needed more, so we called at the Co-operative Store, which supplied us with all we needed for 7 kopecks a pound. When we told this to the first man, and reproached him for having robbed us, his only reply was: "Show me the fool who let you have it for 7. I will buy all he has for 8, and sell it at my own price!"

It was on this occasion that a Tartar in the Market Square shouted: "Who are these people?"

"Journalists," answered our bank manager friend who accompanied us on our expedition.

"Journalists?" repeated the Tartar, who obviously was a Communist, "but what sort of journalists?" He looked none too pleased, as if he knew too much about journalists.

"Friends of Russia," I said, and the crowd cheered and the Tartar "tovarish"[1] shook me warmly by the hand. After that we went off to a little restaurant and drank Turkish coffee, while the muezzin from the top of the minaret across the road called the Faithful to prayer. I asked the waiter if he was Russian, and he replied proudly that he was a servant of Allah.

(Russia seems to contain more than one metaphorical Irish problem in her great territory.)

On the outskirts of the town of Yalta, and slightly inland, we were taken to a little house standing in a garden, a house that was built by Chekov. It was here that he wrote the famous *Cherry Orchard*. He lived a very simple, half-outdoor invalid life, and all the trees in the garden were planted by his hand. Tolstoi and Gorky used to go and stay with him, and Stanislavski with the Theatre of Art Company went there to rehearse.

Chekov's sister still lived there, and proudly showed the house to those who asked. We were

[1] Comrade.

taken by two friends, the bank manager and an anarchist (the Secretary of President Kalinin), both of whom had the Chekov " culte," and went there in a spirit of reverence, as pilgrims to a shrine.

CHAPTER XVII

SEVASTOPOL AND THE RED FLEET

THE morning we left Livadia, our friends assembled to say good-bye to us and watch our departure. It was a mixed crowd of Communists and bourgeoisie, for during our short visit we had acted as a sort of bridge between the two. They had become our real friends. We had grown accustomed to see their familiar faces at eight o'clock breakfast, and to make our plans together for the day. We had talked heart to heart sometimes for hours on the sunny beach, or else far into the night, about things of vital mutual interest. We knew all that our friends had endured in the recent dark past. We understood all their hopes concerning the future. They seemed to have allowed us to share in their thoughts. We felt we belonged to a fraternity. They never made us remember that we were foreigners or strangers.

Would we ever meet again? That was what

we asked ourselves and one another that last morning.

"Shall we meet again? and if so, where and when?" We promised ourselves that we would return, that we would meet in Moscow—in Leningrad—we would write—the world is small.

There were little gifts of flowers and fruit and books. And then we started off once more, and waved until we were out of sight.

It is 50 miles from Livadia to Sevastopol, of which 25 miles are unforgettably beautiful. On one side a sloping coast-line and a sea of Mediterranean blue, on the other great rocky mountains rising sheer up and at times almost overhanging. Unfortunately the Crimean coast was slipping down in parts towards the sea, and when this slipping down process involved the road also it became extremely unpleasant as a surface for motor traffic. In places the road had simply subsided a few feet, and the wall that buttressed it had gone rolling down the hill-side. As the railway did not go beyond Simferopol or Sevastopol, 50 miles away, everyone who went to Yalta or to any of the sea-coast resorts was obliged to go by motor. There was an organisation known as the Krimkurso, a

Government company of what they called "motor-cars for exploitation." We met at least one car every mile along our way. This being the most frequented road in Russia, it was patrolled by armed guards, cheery young fellows, burnt dark brown, stripped to the waist and with a rifle slung over their bare shoulders.

It was sunset when we crossed the mountains and descended into the plain of Balaclavskoye, famous as the Balaclava battle-field of 1854. The plain was full of memorials, English and French, but perhaps the most picturesque of all was the tall column on a mound surmounted by a great bronze Imperial eagle, the monument to the Russian officers and men who were sabred at their guns by the English Light Brigade. From this point of vantage we watched the sunset colour the plain and mountains into a gorgeous Turner picture.

Sevastopol is a picturesque little seaport town where life was very normal, and one had to say to oneself continually, "I am in Soviet Russia," in order to believe it! Almost one might have been anywhere in Europe.

There were restaurants in gardens that were full of flowers, fountains and music. In the public garden by the edge of the sea the band

RED GUARD PATROL ON THE CRIMEAN COAST ROAD.

ON THE CRIMEAN COAST ROAD.

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played every night. A giant hoarding left one in no doubt as to the appearance of Douglas Fairbanks at the town Kino in *The Three Musketeers*!

We lived on peaches, melons and grapes, which cost only a few kopecks a pound, and we had whipped cream in our coffee for our breakfast. The only conspicuous reminder of Soviet Russia were the people who dined at the little white tables in the fountained gardens. These for the most part were either Tartar workmen in their fur kalpaks, or white uniformed Naval officers with scarlet stripes and stars on their sleeves.

In Russia, if one is a foreigner, one is never without a friend, someone is always ready to be attached. This attachment may not be always desirable, like the Turkish acrobat in Kiev and the English anarchist in Simferopol. In Sevastopol we received two offers of help. One was from a French commercial man, who wore a Red star in his buttonhole, and sneered at Russia, at the Russian Government and at everything Russian. The other was a fat and bearded Moscovite, who was also anti-Bolshevik, and had been eight times in prison! He had only just

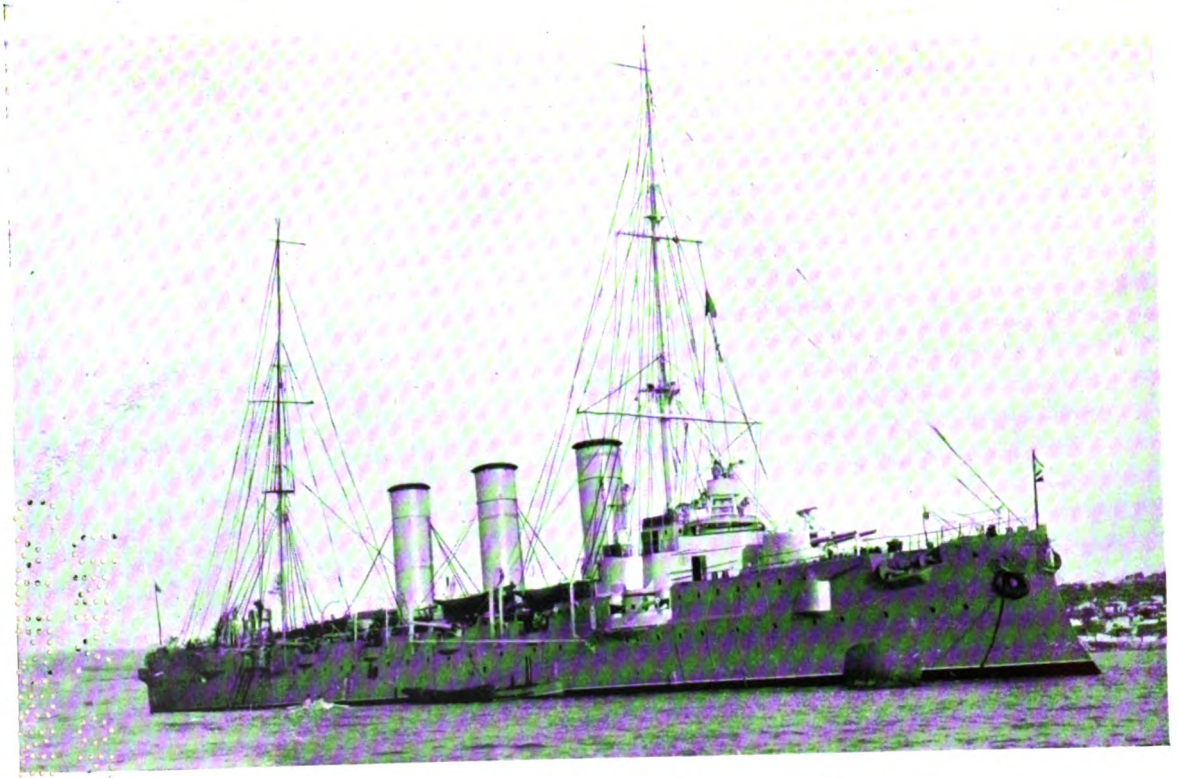
got out. As I have a prejudice against anti-Bolsheviks who wear Red stars, we accepted as interpreter the Moscovite, who wore none, and the first thing we asked him to do was to accompany us to the Ispolkom! He did so without any reluctance, and he was evidently well known to the local authorities, but he had a jocular manner and an attitude of humorous indifference towards everything official. He proved himself a very apt interpreter. Having been head engineer at the Mercédès works in Paris before the war, his French was excellent. My next expressed wish was to see the Red Fleet. The efficient Moscovite said he could arrange it, he knew the Admiral in Command. He conducted us to the head-quarters of the staff, and in the conference cabin, sitting behind a giant desk, we were introduced to the Commander-in-Chief and a Naval Communist sitting next to him. The Rakovsky letter did its magic work. The Admiral (a man of thirty-eight or forty years, smiling and handsome) having consulted the Communist, we were given permission to visit a submarine, a cruiser and a destroyer. Two naval officers took us off in a motor-boat, but our Moscovite was missing. We were told that as journalists and friends of Rakovsky we could go on board the ships, but

as our friend had no status and no work he could not accompany us.

I once lived for five days on board the French flagship at Mudania, and for a week on board the American Commodore's destroyer at Smyrna, so I felt myself a not entirely incompetent judge of ships! The Red cruiser seemed to me in every way as clean and well ordered as the French cruiser, and there was the eternal painting that seems to be always going on in every nation's fleet. There was even the same amount of saluting; for as we came alongside, at the sound of a whistle everybody within sight saluted, and at the second whistle everybody stopped saluting. While we were on board the *Commintern* a submarine and a patrol boat came into port, and the salutes that were exchanged between the ships recalled old days at Malta when my brother was midshipman in the Mediterranean flagship. The *Nezamojni* is a new destroyer recently finished at the works at Nikolaiev, and her guns bore the date of 1924. Naturally one could not judge of fighting efficiency from mere inspection in harbour, but most certainly the ships were well cared for and the guns clean, oiled and ready for use. And Peter, whose judgment as an ex-naval officer is worth consideration, was extremely well im-

pressed. The fleet had just returned from a cruise to Odessa, and seemed more in a state of work than of parade. In each ship there was a clubroom for the seamen, which is known as the "Lenin corner." It was full of newspapers, magazines, and Red literature. "Before the Revolution the men were not allowed to read anything, now they can read everything!" we were told. That is to say, that before the Revolution they were not allowed to read anything that was Red, now they may not read anything that is not Red! It is like suddenly feeding children on chocolate who have never had anything but bread and milk. Chocolate is very nourishing and far more agreeable! As for the officers, most of them had served in the Imperial days, but the difference now was that they held no rank. Here again was a subtle difference: "While the captain of a ship is in command of his ship he is a captain. When he is no longer in command he is no longer a captain." In reply to which I asked: "Can a captain go back to being a seaman?" The answer was "No, an officer does not go back below the rank that he has once held." "Then—when is an officer not an officer?"

"When he's on shore, then he is neither



THE RED CRUISER "COMINTERN" AT SEVASTOPOL

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a captain nor an admiral, but simply a comrade."

It was all rather perplexing to the traditionally trained mind, but whatever the difference between the old system and the new it seemed to be more a matter of spirit than of fact. The discipline was just the same, but everyone looked smiling and content.

The next day the President of the Naval Tribunal invited us to visit the Tribunal buildings. Our Moscovite friend offered to accompany us, but in view of the fact that he seemed to be officially so very much disapproved of, it seemed more tactful to go without him. On arrival at the Tribunal, we found the President and five others awaiting us, and not one of them could speak a word of anything but Russian. They asked us why we had not brought an interpreter friend. We explained that as he was not a Communist, and as they did not like him we left him behind. Thereupon they all laughed: "'Nichevo, Nichevo,' what does that matter—he is a good interpreter," and they called him up on the telephone, and asked him to come at once! Peter and I looked at one another in surprise; it was evident that we did not yet understand the working of the Soviet Russian mind.

We were held up at Sevastopol longer than we intended. A great storm raged for two days, during which the boat from Batoum for Odessa could not set out to sea. We therefore saw "the sights." Apart from the 1854 War Museum (Sevastopol still lives in the glamour of her Crimean War importance), the most interesting thing to see is the "Panorama." This round stone building stands on the top of a hill. It contains a great circular panoramic painting by Roubaud, of the storming of Sevastopol. One had the sensation of being in the besieged city and of watching the attack. From a view of the fleets at sea, one turned inland, and one saw the French positions on one side and the British on the other, and the hills lit up by an evening sky. Close around one (and as if one were in their very midst) the Russian defences and the valiant defenders. Beneath an ikon with its flickering candles a row of Russian dead.

It was pure realism, and as realism it was very fine and quite unique of its kind. It was said that the French had offered large sums to buy it, but obviously the most suitable place for it was in Sevastopol itself, and nowhere else.

Just outside the town, hardly a few versts away, we visited the ruins of famous Chersonese,

the Greek trading station that was founded in the sixth century B.C. A few Greek tombs, some Roman reliefs and a few Byzantine columns had been collected into a little museum on the site. The city, however, left few traces except foundations, and one mile of it had crumbled into the sea. The traders left no relics of art or beauty to suggest that they belonged to the golden age of Greece. More interesting than anything Hellenic was a life-sized Mongolian figure carved out of red stone, archaic in design, crowned with a large hat, and clasping a book to its breast. This figure was brought from Bakhchi-Sarai, the ancient Tartar capital, and undoubtedly belonged to a period when the Tartars were pure Mongolian, before the fusion of the races.

Sightseeing did not take us long, and after that there was very little to do, certainly not enough to keep us busy for a week. Peter got very impatient as day by day went by and no ship came in. We went down to the harbour and went aboard one of the fishing schooners alongside the quay. We asked the captain how much he would charge for taking us to Constantinople. He demanded 100 sterling pounds and a cargo of 300 tons that we could sell at the other end. With this unhelpful offer we returned discon-

solately. It was a Sunday, and on our way we passed through a narrow quiet street where the sound of singing caused us to stop and look round. It came from no very definite direction, and seemed to be high up above our heads. A passer by informed us that the sound emanated from "the Evangelicals" and that their Church was in an upper storey of the house we were passing by. He further urged us to go up and see. They wouldn't mind, he said.

Upstairs we found a long, low narrow room like a schoolroom, full of pews, and we sat awhile and listened to the evangelical service. It all seemed very strange and out of keeping with the Russian character, but rather simple and touching. Before the Revolution these people had to conduct their services in secrecy, for they were regarded by the Imperial Government as a schism of the Holy Church and were persecuted accordingly.

One of the most astounding sights in Sevastopol was the crowd of people who sat all night on the sidewalk outside the office of the Krimkurso Motor Company. There were of course more people going to the Crimean seaside resorts than there were motors to take them. They would arrive on the Moscow train, and instead

PEOPLE WHO WAIT ALL NIGHT OUTSIDE THE MOTOR OFFICE FOR A CAR TO TAKE THEM TO THE RIVIERA IN THE MORNING.

THE RED ARMY IN THE BOWS OF THE SHIP BOUND FOR ODESSA.

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of sleeping at an hotel would prefer to sit in an open doorway or on the pavement, so as to be early in the scramble for motor-cars in the morning. Quite well-dressed women, and even old ones, resigned themselves to this condition of things. Our window was just opposite, and all night long one heard them talking, or else one was awakened by the shouts of the cigarette and cake vendors, who shared the vigil. I suppose these people had been through such hardships and discomforts during the years of Revolution that they had accustomed themselves to anything. To have arrived at a condition of things when it was possible in any way to take a holiday in the Crimea was a marvellous transformation, at least so we were told by our friends at Livadia.

When the Batoum–Yalta ship at last came in to Sevastopol, we understood why it had been reluctant to put to sea in a storm. Its normal passenger capacity was probably about 150, but it had 600 on board, mostly on deck! The bows of the ship were given up to the Red Army and their horses. The captain allowed us to go up to the "compass platform" above the bridge, where we were fairly comfortable and quiet.

The fat Moscovite had insisted upon accompanying us. He had private business, he said, in Odessa. Most of the night we spent listening to the soldiers singing their revolutionary songs.

In the stern of the ship the sailors sang in chorus and danced Caucasian dances. The sky was bright with stars, and one forgot discomforts.

Late the next day we arrived at Odessa. There was some discussion as to the best method of getting the motor bicycle and sidecar out of the ship. The Red Army soldiers, who were unloading their own gear, listened to the discussion, and then one of them said to another: "Come on, tovarish, let us show these English how it is done." And immediately five of them shouldered it, and carried it off! A superb performance!

CHAPTER XVIII

A KALEIDOSCOPE OF ODESSA

ODESSA stands upon a cliff, a city of wide avenues and stately houses. We called at the Ispolkom, and our reception reminded us that we were back in friendly Ukraine and no longer in Crimean Tartary, where we were left to our resources and had to rely on any haphazard help that came our way.

Our first inquiry was how to get to Constantinople. We then learnt that by no possible means could we get away for ten days. The Italian Lloyd Triestino ships that used to come twice a week came now only twice a month, and we had just missed one. Cargo boats there were none, grain from this year's harvest having not yet begun to be exported. Peter was much agitated by this enforced delay, for it meant that we would not cross the Balkans before the snows fell. Personally I rejoiced at having these extra days in Russia.

At the Hotel London, high up overlooking the

harbour, we found excellent accommodation, even a private bathroom. In the palm court there was excellent food accompanied by music, but the prices soared higher even than New York. Our first dinner cost twenty-two shillings for a dish of cutlets and a bottle of wine. We complained bitterly to a friendly Soviet official, and later discovered that the hotel was a Government concern under his special jurisdiction! After that the prices became slightly more normal.

Our ten days in Odessa were truly kaleidoscopic. We were rushed round in motor-cars, and even taken up in a military aeroplane. We saw everything that concerned the organisation of the town, that is to say the water works, the electric works, the tramcar works, the nursery garden that supplied the public parks with bedding-out plants, the fire brigade, the city slaughter-house and the Medical University. These sights proved not that Odessa was a peculiarly original town, but that it was normal. At the slaughter-house we beheld at last the proverbial Bolsheviks with their "hands dripping with blood." It is not pleasant having animals felled all around one, but it was done humanely and efficiently, except as regards those that had to be killed according to Jewish rite. This flowing

AT ODESSA : MR. RAMSAY MACDONALD STARTING OFF TO CALL UPON THE KING!

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of living blood is detestable and cruel. Unfortunately in Odessa 70 per cent. of the beasts had to be slaughtered according to this custom.

At the Medical University we were invited to see an operation. We put on white overalls outside the operating-room and with due ceremony were ushered in. The operation, however, was not being performed on a human, the surgeons were trying it on the dog. It was most distressing to hear the animal whining even with a chloroform mask over its nose, and we got away as soon as we could.

In the Gynœcological Museum we were shown a strange collection of interesting freaks. Bottled babies were turned out of their jars like preserved peaches and laid on an open tray for our closer inspection.

It was rather a relief after this to be carried off to the "Kinofabrik" by the movie director. This kinofabrik, like everything else, was a Government concern. It had a garden carefully laid out and full of flowers, and in the garden one met lovely queens and brightly uniformed Czarist officers. It was rather disconcerting to come suddenly upon Mr. Ramsay MacDonald in tall hat and white kid gloves, about to call upon the King! The make-up was excellent, devoid of

exaggeration or caricature. Realising the perfection of this bourgeois personification, the Russian MacDonald felt even a little ill at ease!

Having seen this wide variety of activity, we were then shown an interesting experiment in engineering. Owing to the fact that Odessa is built over a subterranean waterway, part of the town on the cliff has completely subsided. The accumulated water of centuries finding no outlet had undermined the ground beneath the city foundations. There were miles along the seashore where all trace of houses had disappeared, and the land looked as if there had been an earthquake. This condition had been growing steadily worse for the last twenty-five years.

According to the theory of the engineers, if the water could be given an outlet the future of the city would be safe. They had already constructed tunnels transversely, and we were taken through one a mile long from the coast inland. The rocky sides of the tunnel were pouring with water, and already a considerable stream was flowing to the sea. There still remained much tunnelling work to be constructed, but the engineers were confident they had solved the problem of landslides.

We heard a good deal of talk about the new Moldavian Republic which was about to be proclaimed, and it was amusing, in view of the Bessarabian war scare this spring, to see what were the real Russian plans. The Red Army, I am convinced, will never be used in a war of aggression; the Roumanians need have no fear of that. Aggression means Imperialism to the Communist mind, and the Red Army has been assured that its existence is for the *defence* "of the revolutionary gains." The methods of the Soviet Government are far more subtle. A new Moldavian Republic was seceding from the Ukraine and about to form its own Government. But the majority of Moldavians are in the territory across the River Dniester which is now Roumania. The idea was that the so-called Moldavians would declare their self-determination and in time join the Moldavian Federated Soviet Republic.

The people in the villages along the Russian side of the river would not allow the opposite bank to be called Roumania. "That is Moldavia," they said: "These are our brother Moldavians." It will be interesting to watch the sequel.

The Roumanian Frontier Army was composed

of Roumanians; they did not allow any Moldavian soldiers at these posts. Nevertheless the deserters from the Roumanian Army amounted sometimes to forty a day, and were the cause of miniature battles. The Roumanians fired at the deserters swimming across the river, and the Russians fired at the Roumanians who were firing at the deserters! When cross-questioned, these deserters admitted that in the Roumanian Army they were well fed, but their complaint was that at the slightest pretext they were beaten with whips.

We motored through the Moldavian villages, which were charming; the long, low houses with thatched roofs were painted white, with Reckitt's blue panels. Some of the houses were an almost luminous blue.

The General in command of the frontier military police arranged for us to stay in a cottage for the night. The peasants seemed to think it quite natural to give up their two big rooms to us. It was the traditional peasant room with its Holy Corner full of ikons, another corner with a bed piled up with pillows, and a third corner consisting of the all-important stove upon which they sleep in winter. The room smelt of aromatic herbs and fruits, and was marvellously clean.

THE GENERAL IN COMMAND OF THE FRONTIER MILITARY POLICE (MOLDAVIA).

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I pointed out the corner of ikons to the Communist General, and asked him what he thought. He shrugged his shoulders and smiled. "The children must have their toys," he said. At the time of our visit the peasants were busily engaged bringing in the grapes and pressing them. Cart-loads full were brought into the yard of our house; there were great tubs full of fomenting juice which was excellent to drink. The peasants drank it by the gallon, as a result of which most of them were intoxicated, but their intoxication was quite harmless, and they sang their folk-songs to the moon up to the hour of dawn.

The General in command of the frontier was an interesting personality. He was only thirty years old, and had spent much time in Czarist prisons. For five years he had had chains round his wrists and ankles. He was a Communist before the war, and was imprisoned for refusing to serve in the Imperial Army. When I told him that his physique was a good advertisement for the Czar's prisons, he smiled: "Yes—I am very strong. They beat my lungs, but they could not break them."

Peter and I looked mystified; we did not understand. How could anybody's lungs be beaten? The General was surprised at our

ignorance, and then he explained that in the Imperial prisons it was customary, if a political prisoner was rebellious or unrepenting, for two men to lift him by the arms and legs and beat his back upon the floor until the blood gushed from the mouth, which meant that the lung was broken. He told it quite simply as if it was an occurrence that everybody knew about. Try as his gaolers would, however, nothing could break the lungs of this thick-set giant.

His relationship with his men interested me. I watched him make surprise visits to the frontier station. As soon as he appeared, a sentry rang a bell and the guard hurriedly turned out and stood to attention while the officer made his report. Then followed a minute inspection of barracks, arms and kit. After that officers and men adjourned to the club, known as "Lenin's corner," where they smoked and talked as comrades and equals. It was only on duty that the General ranked as a Commander. Off duty he had no rank whatever. He was called "Tovarish Petrovitch," not General, and the soldiers he passed by on the road did not have to salute him. On one occasion he was obliged to stop and ask the way. A soldier sitting by the roadside with some workmen was engaged in mending a tele-

graph wire. The soldier when questioned remained sitting. The General asked him if he knew that his Commander-in-Chief was speaking to him. The soldier, who was an ignorant peasant recruit, still remained sitting. Thereupon the General in a tone of admonishment, as if he were speaking to a naughty child, ordered him to stand up, and the man shamefacedly scrambled to his feet. It must be difficult for the peasant mind to grasp when discipline has to replace fraternity under the new system.

CHAPTER XIX

THE WORKERS AND THE CHILDREN

THE most interesting things to see were of course those newly created since the Revolution. Everything new was something for the worker.

In Odessa, for instance, one had a striking example of the efforts of the local Government to create workmen's suburbs out of the ruins. Everything was ruins outside of the main part of the town, and the ruins continued for many miles beyond the workers' district and beyond the summer villa district where the rich merchants had their houses and gardens. The workers' dwellings were the first to be restored, and already there were many houses well roofed and freshly painted. The streets had newly planted avenues of trees, and many public gardens were being laid out, trees and flowers planted and statuary erected. It was hard to believe in the bankruptcy of the Soviet Government when one saw some of the things that were being done. It is logical that statues of Lenin and Karl Marx should be

ordered for public places, but in front of the big theatre there was a newly erected fountain-group. It was called "Youth," and consisted of three children looking at a frog. It was modelled very conventionally in white marble by an Italian artist. This in strange contrast with England, where the only orders for sculpture are those for war memorials.

At my request we were allowed to visit the jute factory on the outskirts of the town, one of the biggest in Russia. It employed chiefly women. Various heads of departments and unions received us; they all looked like simple workmen. Never having seen a jute factory before, I could not make any comparisons. According to their own statistics, they employed 2,500 workers, about 800 more than before the Revolution, and their output was 25 per cent. higher.

The atmosphere was thick with jute dust, which is extremely detrimental to the lungs. The directors informed me that plans were being made for new ventilation, which they hoped would be installed in the coming year. Meanwhile the women worked an eight-hour day in four-hour shifts. Girls from sixteen to eighteen worked four hours a day without pay, but received food. The house of the former director and his garden

had been turned into a crèche or kindergarten for the children of the workers. This was extremely well arranged, with a playroom, a schoolroom, dining-room and dormitory. There were rows of little white cots with clean linen for the children of the night-workers. The mothers of breast-fed babies were allowed off every three hours without any deduction of wages. Peter and I get uselessly heated in a discussion on this subject. He judges everything from the point of view of efficiency. He thinks that a woman suckling her child should not be employed, or else that women who have to work in factories should not have children. Probably some of them would agree with him. But until the State subsidises women to make children, or until the birth-control propagandists have created a new world for women, conditions will remain as they are. Personally I appreciate any legislation that tries to alleviate the hardness of the situation.

We were next taken through a large empty room which is the workers' winter dining-room, and through it to an open-air restaurant full of little tables under an awning. Here a dinner of two courses was provided for 30 kopecks, which, at the rate of exchange, is about ninepence English.

Being by this time tired and hungry (it took us four and a half hours to see the factory and all its concerns), I begged to be allowed to eat a workman's dinner at workman's prices, and not at prices of the Hotel London. We were joined by a group of workers who also were dining, and who asked if they could eat with us. We each had a large plate full of the famous Russian soup called " bortsch," which is composed of vegetables, cream and meat, followed by mince with potatoes and kasha (a species of barley), far more than one could possibly eat.

Meanwhile the workers asked us a thousand questions about working conditions in England. They asked Peter the price of bread, of butter and of sugar. Peter did not know. They asked him why he did not know (happily they did not ask me, for I did not know either). He said that he did not know because he paid for everything together at the end of the month (how dreadfully bourgeois of him!), to which the worker replied thoughtfully: " You must be very rich." Peter denied that he was rich, on the contrary he was unusually poor. The worker explained, " I mean that England must be very rich to be able to give credit like that." This English credit system may or may not be a sign of richness,

but it certainly is an example of mutual trust between the two parties concerned. One of the workers wished to know why England, which is so full of cultured people who are sympathetic to Russia (shades of Mr. Bernard Shaw!), did not evolve Communism.

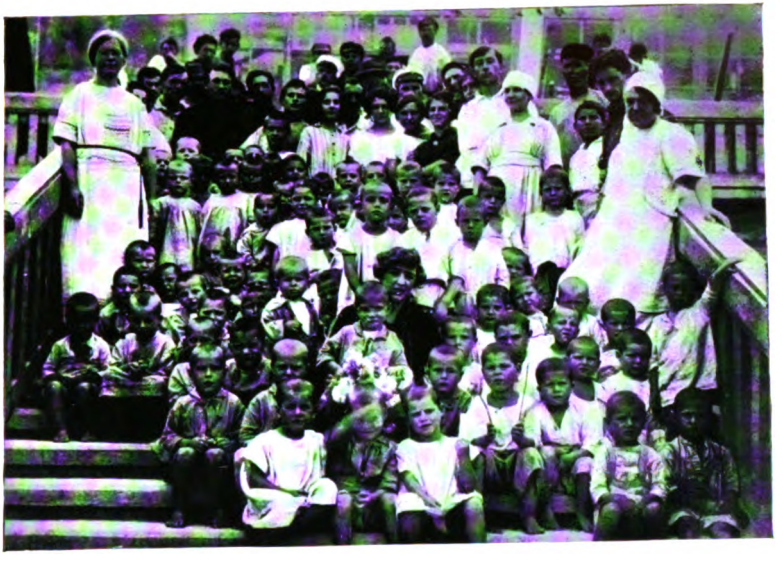
The Russian working class has developed the most astonishing political consciousness. They are full of thoughtful speculation as to their own position, and are athirst for information that can establish a comparison.

They proudly showed us their club, full of Red literature, and the adult class-room with its library full of texts and mottoes concerning the virtue of learning and reading. I do not believe they realise that we in England have no such problem, but the Russian feels a burning sense of indignation for the illiteracy and the intellectual darkness that is his heritage from the Imperial system. There is a prodigious effort to rise from this condition, but the great need is for efficient teachers. Under any normal conditions the teachers would be adequate and sufficient, but for a nation the size of Federated Russia, with a population struggling from darkness into light, teachers, and more teachers, is the crying need of the moment.

With an army of 700,000 men, changing and automatically renewing every two years, the Government is able to insure that these at least shall receive education. The ignorant peasant boy who arrives from his village farm is obliged to undergo a course of instruction. If reading and writing is not required, he has at all events to learn about modern and progressive agricultural methods, as well as political economy and science. The man who returns to his village after military service is physically and mentally unrecognisable as the man who left it two years before. He brings with him advanced views and knowledge on many things, and he helps to revolutionise the old-fashioned village and shake it out of its centuries-old lethargy.

It is particularly interesting to speculate as to the future generation of Russia. There are masses and masses of schools in which the orphans of the wars and the famines have been collected together. With their hair all cut short in the same fashion, the smallest tots, boys and girls together, march with their Red banners and sing their Red songs as they march. They are subjected to the most drastic physical drill from the tenderest age until verging on maturity. I can only suppose that these children represent the

fittest that have survived, for they are fit indeed. Even those who were still isolated and being treated for scurvy as a result of famine, were well-developed and examples of the finest physique. A weak, frail child is a most unusual sight in Russia, as also the old and the feeble. Only the strongest of the nation have survived. One is constantly amazed by the youth and the strength of the population. These "State children" have a martial spirit, a sense of independence and of self-determination that is very striking. Among other things they are taught to believe in themselves and not in the priest. I will not say that they are taught to disbelieve in God, for although this may appear to be so at first sight, the matter is far more profound if one cares to take the trouble to inquire into it. There is certainly an attack upon the Church, but God is explained to them as the ignorant way of referring to Nature. Sun, rain, wind and fire—these are the real God. Sun gives light and warmth, light and warmth give life, rain waters life, and wind fans life, and life which is Nature used to be called God for want of a better name. So these children are growing up, with their conception of Nature and of the rights of man, in a country where a class that no longer exists



"ORPHANS OF THE STORM"—CHILDREN FROM A STATE SCHOOL AT ODESSA.

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is spoken of with derision, and where they themselves are regarded not as the charity dependents of the State, but as the future masters of the State. No wonder they hold their heads so proudly! Theirs are no longer the wretched hovel homes, where work was the substitute of education; their home is beneath the roof of a one time rich man's palace, their living conditions are hygienic, their education enlightening.

Can anyone speculate as to the future of a Federated Russia that will be dominated by this male and female population?

CHAPTER XX

HOUSE-HUNTING IN RUSSIA

THE longer one remained in Russia the more one realised there were two Russias: That of the worker and that of "the others."

It is a simple and a pleasant world if one is a worker, that is to say a real proletarian belonging to a Union. These have special privileges, such as holidays in charming rest-houses, with good food, medical attendance and entertainments, all free. On the practical side of life there are co-operative stores where prices are 30 per cent. cheaper than the market price, there are proletarian restaurants where a dinner that costs 60 kopecks (100 kopecks to the rouble) is just as good as the dinner in the bourgeois restaurants for four or five roubles.

To satisfy my own curiosity as to the possibility of a person like myself going to live in Russia, I affected to be house-hunting. There lurked, after all, the possibility of finding that the scheme was

feasible, and if it was not, then at least curiosity would be satisfied.

My children are learning Russian, and a year in Russia would greatly benefit them. Also I could write a novel about modern Russia. So I explained to the local officials when they affected surprise.

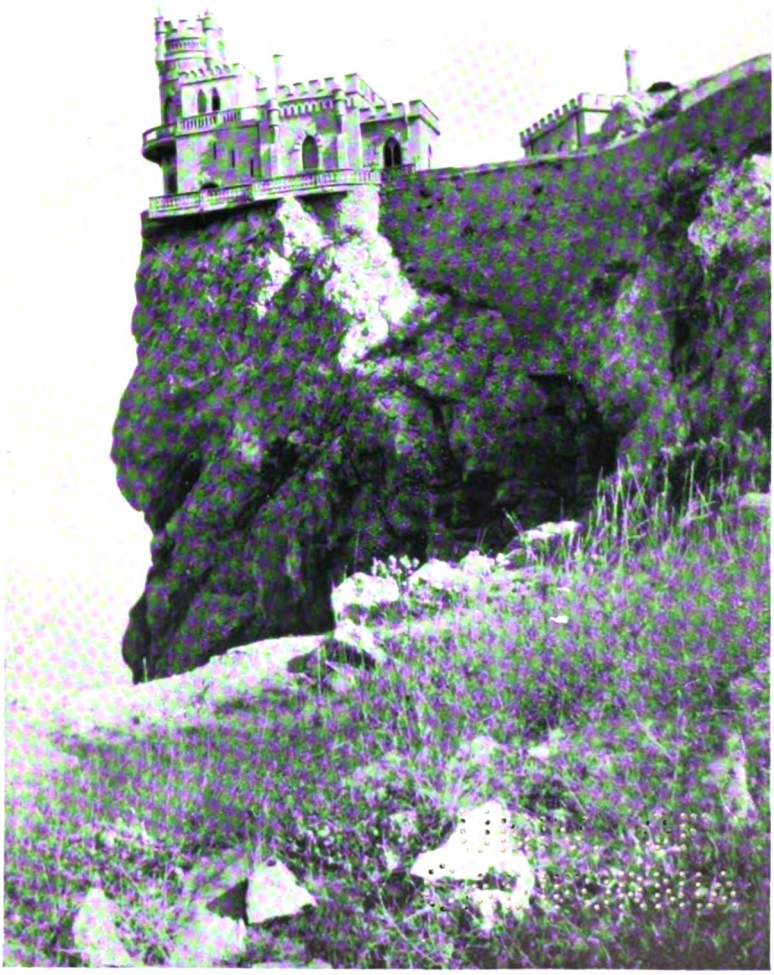
I tried it first in the Crimea. A little miniature modern castle high up on a rocky pinnacle above the sea looked like a fairy tale. It was uninhabited. The ceilings were decorated with carved beams and gargoyles, the doors were solid and massive. Nothing was needed but some window panes. The view was fantastically lovely, and far away below there was a bathing-beach. I made inquiries, and to my surprise I was told that most certainly I could have it if I cared to put it in order. But—(and they laughed) it was built by a rich woman from Moscow, whose lover deserted her. She chose this loneliest and most isolated spot to build a castle which was suitable only for a single person—she retired from the world and slowly went mad! Nobody else would live in it, not even the opera singer for whom it was subsequently bought by an adoring Grand Duke. The proletariat thought it unsafe, they were sure the rock

was insecure, the castle was fit only for picnic parties.

The journey from Yalta to Odessa decided me that probably it was not the easiest spot in the world to get at even if it was the loveliest.

At Odessa there was ample time to do more house-hunting. I consulted the Ispolkom. They referred me to the head of the department, a comrade who had all the houses and apartments of the town at his disposal. By him I was informed that "for restoration" I might have an apartment of five or six rooms rent free for one year, but the cost of the restoration would be 400 sterling pounds. I humbly asked if there were anything cheaper, and I was assured that 400 pounds was not a large sum, that in fact is was "a mere nothing"!

Thus discouraged, I motored to the country. In a charming summer suburb called Arcadia I happened by chance upon a villa bungalow. It stood in a garden on the high sea cliff. It was a most unusual villa to have survived the revolutionary years. Moreover, it was equipped with electric light, telephone, bathroom and furniture. At the moment it happened to be one of the inevitable rest-houses for workers, but for six months, from November to the end of



TO BE LET *RENT FREE* ON THE RUSSIAN RIVIERA!

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May, it was to be uninhabited except by a caretaker. The idea occurred to me that perhaps I might be allowed to rent it for those six months. It is true that the winter would be very severe, that the tramcars would stop running and the road be impassable to motors, but for the sake of the children and for economy, sacrifices must be made. I appealed to another department, the head of the suburban villa district. This little workman official looked at me with surprised eyes. The electric light, he said, was going to be cut off for the winter and the furniture removed. "But," I argued, "if I rent it, may you not leave the electric light and the furniture?" Well, yes, on second thoughts he said he might, and he went off to institute inquiries. After awhile he returned, and in a voice of triumph announced: "You may have six rooms in that villa; the rooms to be your own selection. We will furnish it *richly* (!) for you. We will leave you the electric light, and our price for six months is 2,000 roubles." I calculated in my mind that 2,000 roubles was 250 pounds. "That," I said, "is the price of a villa at Deauville for the season." He had never heard of Deauville.

"What is your price?" he asked.

I remembered that a Turkish diplomat had

assured me that I could find a furnished villa with a garden on the Bosphorus for 100 pounds a year. I mentioned this to the Soviet workman. He looked at me and burst out laughing. "We have no such prices as that in Russia," he said in a tone of superiority. I felt ridiculously uncomfortable. A simple working man—one who had never owned a superfluous penny in his life—was laughing at me! An inferiority complex took possession of me. How I resented being poor, so poor that even the poor were amused by my requirements. I had asked for something that was out of my reach! How humiliating and ridiculous. I wished I had never asked about the villa, I wished I had never let the Russian worker know that I was too poor even to afford a desolate "datcha" at the end of an impassable road on the top of a windy cliff in the winter-time. I realised that my demand was preposterous, and with a proud effort at indifference, I asked: "If I were a member of a union—even of an English union—could you let me have it a little cheaper?"

The workman looked me over and: "Well, yes—we could then make some slight reduction," he replied. I said that I would go hurriedly back to England and join a union! I left the office in a state of rebellion. Why, I asked myself,

should these working people have everything? Why should they live in comfortable houses and get what is best in the land, while I and my class were excluded from everything? Why should life be so easy for them, so difficult for me?

Just outside the office a blind colonel of the Imperial Army, dressed in the tattered remnants of his uniform, stood begging. My indignation increased, how should one tolerate such conditions? All of a sudden I realised that I was feeling all the grievances that the working man felt before the Revolution. Was not the situation just the same, only reversed? Of course they would not admit to their privileges. Had they rid themselves of their Russian bourgeois class in order to harbour a foreigner in their midst? Worker I might be, but not a *prolétaise*—merely one of "the others."

CHAPTER XXI

LAST DAYS

THERE was a steamer in Odessa harbour, and she was flying the British flag. Her name, however, was the *Kamenetz-Podolsk*, belonging to the Arcos Company, and she was a Russian ship. We thought we might get a passage in her to Constantinople if she happened to be leaving before the Lloyd Triestino ship. So we asked our Moscovite to accompany us down to the quay and help us to get on board. He still shadowed us, but by this time out of affection rather than any useful motive. He had ceased to be our recognised interpreter since our second day in Odessa, for the Foreign Affairs department had attached an official to us. This had been done almost at my request, for, much as I liked our faithful Moscovite, his anti-Russianism was a source of continual irritation to me. He was not merely anti-Soviet, which of course he had a perfect right to be, but he was anti-Russian. He believed in the absolute inefficiency of the

Russian people. He regarded Russian culture with open contempt. He sneered at everything Russian and proclaimed his French descent! One day I told him frankly that I would not see him any more, because he was spoiling my last days: "Russia to me is a religion, an inspiration; it is lover, husband, child to me, and you continually put a heavy foot through the tissue of my dreams."

He was sorry, and promised to try and control himself, but he could not! Even in the hall of the hotel, he would inveigh in a loud voice against "ces sacrés imbéciles" of the "new régime," who were responsible for all the discomforts and irritations of his life!

"How do you expect not to get into trouble, when you go on like that?" I asked him.

He did not care; his bag was packed. He said he always kept it packed ready for the moment when he would be arrested again and led off to prison! And he surely would be arrested again, for he was simply asking for trouble.

He told us he would like to leave Russia—for ever, but that the Soviet authorities would not let him go. I asked the Soviet authorities why they did not let him go. A man of that type, I said, could be no use to Russia. The reply

was that he certainly could leave Russia whenever he wished to. When we offered to help him to go, it became perfectly evident that he really did not want to. He wished, he said, to make a couple of thousand pounds in Russia first!

We took him with us on our night visit to the ship in harbour, in order to help us with the necessary formalities and permits. The G.P.U. officer on guard, however, knew us at once, and we had no difficulties whatever. By this time we had become rather familiar to the authorities of Odessa. The newspapers had interviewed us and published our photographs; we had appeared in a film at all the cinema theatres of the town. Moreover, I had written several articles which had been translated for the local newspaper as well as for the Moscow *Isvestia*. As a result everybody was as friendly as possible wherever we went.

At the ship's gangway a group of soldiers looked at our faces by the light of their lanterns, and gave us greeting in Russian and let us pass on.

We walked on board that ship as if she were ours! Some of the English officers and crew appeared at their cabin doors in great surprise.

What were we? Who were we? How had we managed to get on board?

The captain, an oldish man, typically British, appeared and led us to his cabin. We stayed a long time, and our Moscovite friend enjoyed the first whisky and soda he had had for years. The captain, being practical and accustomed to British methods, was appalled by the fact that the ship was being kept waiting for a month for a cargo of timber which should have been ready to be put on board the moment she had been unloaded. This month of waiting added I forget how much to the expenses of the timber cargo. He could not get over the "nichevo" character of the Russian nation.

He was much interested in our experiences and impressions. He was surprised that we had met any Communists. He had not met any, he said, and he wondered what they were like. He had only met people who had got crowbars hidden away, ready for the "pogrom" signal! I asked why it was necessary to hide crowbars. I understand that one might have to hide a rifle, or even a revolver, but why hide a crowbar? I only relate this, because it represents two absolutely opposite impressions of Russia by people who were there.

The captain never met any Communists, he only met the people who felt about them as he did! We met that kind, too, but not many. Our evening in the Anglo-Soviet ship was so reminiscent of England that when I got back on to the quay it seemed quite strange to see the Red Army soldiers with their pointed caps, and I confess that it made me realise my deep regret at our impending departure.

The *Kamenetz-Podolsk*, however, was not leaving Odessa immediately, so there was nothing to do but to await the Italian ship.

September 12th.

The day before our departure a friend in the hotel came up excitedly to my room and said: "A party of English people are breakfasting downstairs. Do you want to come and look at them?" I was not at all interested, and had no curiosity whatever to see them.

"The ladies have short hair, and no stockings on—they look like Communists," persisted my informant. He was a journalist, and it therefore concerned him. Shortly afterwards there was a knock at my door, and the familiar faces peered in of the foreign editor of the London *Daily Herald* and his wife and boy and a pretty English

comrade. They had been spending a month in Gurzuf, the little Tartar village we went to in the Crimea, and were returning to England on the same Lloyd Triestino ship as ourselves. And this was the English party that created so much interest in the restaurant!

In Soviet Russia one never takes anything for granted, and so, although we had received every courtesy and been treated all through our trip with surprising friendliness, we were apprehensive at the end. We wondered if our luggage would be ransacked, if our diaries and our numbers of kodak films would be confiscated or taken away for inspection. We had experienced the effect of ambassadorial letters in Germany and Poland, where we had received no privileges whatever.

In order to forestall any final complications, I called at the Ispolkom and asked if our diaries and films could receive a special permit or whether they could be sealed up in a packet. I was assured that there was nothing to worry about; that the Customs officials and the G.P.U. would be informed about us and that we should have no difficulties.

General Petrovitch then came to say good-bye. He had that very day given up his frontier command and was flying by aeroplane to Moscow,

where he had to do a year's course at the Military Academy. He told me how the day before he had been called to the frontier to confer with the Roumanian General, who came to request that the Roumanian deserters might be repatriated. Petrovitch refused; he said, "You will shoot them if they return." The Roumanian General had promised that they would not be shot, but Petrovitch was adamant in his refusal. (Later I heard that this meeting of the Russian and Roumanian Generals had been reported in the English newspapers, but no one knew for what purpose the meeting had taken place.) Petrovitch, I then learned, belonged to the dreaded G.P.U! He was a General of the Military Police. He was the Chief of all the harbour and Customs officials. No wonder that when we arrived at the quayside with all our luggage, we were met by a G.P.U. official who shook us warmly by the hand and ordered our luggage to be instantly taken, unopened, on board! There were at least four officials who tried to outdo each other in civility and friendliness. The G.P.U. officer, a young fair giant, typical of the Red Army species, and of a physique that one sees rarely outside of Russia, told me in German that Russia was sorry that we were leaving. I stood for some

time on the quay, until finally he said to me: "You know that you are free to go on board?" I told him that I did not want to leave Russia a moment before it was necessary!

One of my surprises was the obvious friendly relations between the Soviet officials and the Italian officers on board the ship. I expected most of the Italians would be Fascisti, but they were not.

When finally the ship left the quayside, a little group of people waved to us for a long time. These were the officials of the G.P.U., and standing next to them our dejected Moscovite with tears in his eyes! "I shall always look back upon these days we have spent together as among the happiest in my life," he said when we parted. As for the G.P.U. they were real Russians, who knew that my love of Russia was not a pose.

CHAPTER XXII

OUTWARD BOUND

It was on the ship outward bound from Odessa that we realised how the outside world regards Russia. Our first stop was at the Roumanian port of Constanza, where our Lloyd Triestino ship remained for three days taking in 700 tons of grain. During this time the Roumanian officials decreed that nobody could go ashore. We were as isolated and quarantined as if we had the plague. The Roumanians considered that any ship coming from a Russian port would infect them with Bolshevism. They ranked Bolshevism with the plagues and the contagious fevers. We had on board 200 Israelites bound for Jerusalem. They were travelling third class and therefore obliged to provide their own food. The bearded Patriarch who headed their party was in despair because he could not go ashore and procure fresh supplies. No one could even step onto the quay to buy fruit from the little boys with baskets full at the foot of the gangway.

Neither could the Italian crew go ashore, and the officers only in the daytime.

When the gangway was lowered on the harbour side, to enable the captain to get into his sailing boat, the port authorities insisted that the gangway should be instantly drawn up in order that there should be no possibility of communication between the passenger ship and the boats in harbour.

In the second class there was an old lady of seventy on her way to Nice with her husband and her two daughters. One night she had an attack of apoplexy, and the ship's doctor said that unless she went ashore she would die. The Roumanian authorities refused. As the old lady belonged to the Evangelical Church, the captain appealed through the Roumanian Evangelical Pastor that in the name of humanity the sick lady be allowed into hospital, but the authorities remained obdurate and the lady died the day we came into Constantinople.

Far more dangerous, however, than the Israelites going to Jerusalem, or the Evangelical lady who was sick, were the English *Daily Herald* party and Comrade "Rose," the beautiful young English Communist girl who had been working in Moscow in the "Commintern" (Communist

International). There was even myself, wearing a Red enamelled star attached to my diamond watch, a star that General Petrovitch had given me before I left.

The captain, however, took us in his sailing boat, and in the shallow water near the shore we cast anchor and jumped overboard to bathe. A few yards away there was a sunny sandy beach, but we dared not step our bare feet upon it lest the Roumanian arrest us and lead us off to prison in our bathing dresses!

The last morning in Constanza harbour we were awakened by the sudden and continuous hooting of the ship's syren. Everyone rushed up on deck in pyjamas and dressing-gown to see what was the matter. Even a Roumanian destroyer came hurrying alongside to ascertain the cause of our prolonged whistle.

The only matter was that a fire had broken out in the grain store alongside the quay, and nobody had seen it except our captain. As soon as it was discovered men hurried back and forth across the quay with little pails of water. An hour later the Italian Consul came on board. He had heard in the town of a Bolshevik outbreak on board and that fighting had taken place between the Russian passengers and the Italian

crew! The destroyer, it was said, had suppressed the outbreak by training all its guns upon us and threatening to blow us out of the water! Doubtless the story was at that moment being telegraphed to the newspaper offices of Bucharest.

Although we were not allowed to distract ourselves by going ashore, at least we were distracted by the newcomers who came on board: sixty members of the Polish Navy League, male and female, all of them wearing white naval yachting caps. The Polish naval cap is of a type in which the ladies heads are almost completely submerged. With their high-heeled shoes and kid gloves (we had grown unaccustomed in Russia to these symbols of civilisation), they looked like a rather ill-equipped musical chorus! Poland of course has not a navy, but we were informed that she means to have one. Nor has Poland any money, but hopes to get some. I do not know if the Polish ladies meant to join the Navy. Why not? . . . since their Russian sisters join the Army?

When, finally, we set out for Constantinople, it was with a really international passenger list. There were, besides the Russians, the Israelites, the English and the Poles; also French and Austrians, Persians, Turks, Roumanians, Armenians and Serbs.

It so happened that a Hebrew girl sat down at the piano and played the *Internationale*. She was not a Communist. On the contrary, she was leaving Russia on account of Communism; but, like most of us, she had come away from Russia with the tune running in her head. The Poles, however, recognised it and protested. They requested the captain to issue an order prohibiting the *Internationale* from being played on board a ship "so full of Polish sailors"!

At Constantinople we were all of us merged into a cosmopolitan haze. We could have come from Constanza, or the Poles from Odessa. Nobody knew and nobody cared; we were simply Jews and Christians in a world of Moslems.

Beloved Bosphorus! I lingered for a week to house-hunt. In Russia, where I made far greater effort, all my efforts were in vain. On the Bosphorus I hardly looked at all, but found it almost immediately by the water's edge, as if it had been waiting for me during all these years, and I foolishly, not knowing, had wasted time in fruitless, hopeless, weary searching. It stood on the water's edge, my eighteenth-century Turkish house. One could fall out of the low

window into the sea! The house was two houses, half of it being the Haremlik and the other half the Seramlik; the rooms were wide and low, the proportions exquisite. Round the sloping garden with its old, twisted, shady fig-trees there was a high wall that none might see over, and in the wall a heavy iron gate that shuts out the world.

In Russia there was no privacy, here there was no publicity. I had found at last a mellow spot in which to live "for ever" (until the next adventure—says Peter who is always unsympathetic). And from my window I shall watch the painted sail ships outlined against the Asia coast, and every evening when the muezzin from the top of the minaret calls the Faithful to prayer, the sun will be setting behind the "Castles of Europe." This will be the end—the end of any further adventures!

CHAPTER XXIII

THE END

PETER left me in Constantinople. He took Satanella on to Trieste by sea. It was too late in the year to cross the Balkans. We had missed it by three weeks. Those were the weeks that we had spent in Sevastopol and Odessa waiting for the ships.

I promised to join him at Trieste. I could arrive by train the same day that he arrived by ship, and still have a week in Constantinople!

I could see Peter did not believe he would ever see me again, and indeed he might not, but that a great impatience seized me to fetch my children and my books, and return as quickly as possible to that lovely house on the Bosphorus!

Accordingly, I arrived in Trieste the day that I had said I would. In fact his ship and my train got into Trieste at four o'clock in the morning. Having arranged no meeting-place, each of us went to different hotels, and the next day we met in the street by chance!

And so the journey began afresh. We started off full of energy towards the mountains. How marvellous the road seemed, and how comfortable the hotels! Above all—how cheap!

On our way to Russia we had seemed to cross all the most expensive countries, for the Dutch gulden was very high, German gold prices were fantastic, Czecho-Slovakia was expensive, Poland had just adopted a new currency and prices were soaring. In Russia the hotels cost almost as much as New York. At last Constantinople had seemed to be reasonable and Italy was marvellously cheap.

But was this Italy? Everyone spoke German. We consulted a pre-war map and discovered we were really in Austria! Before long we were in the Dolomites. It was unforgettably beautiful, but full of war cemeteries, barbed wire and ruins. In the little towns there were sign-posts directing one to the English church and to the kodak supply store! The restaurants had German names. The mountains had their crests in the clouds, their feet in the tourist-haunted valleys. Here was civilisation, conventionality, tradition. Beauty indeed, but no atmosphere. Peter said to me: "You do not seem to be enjoying it." To which I answered: "I am cold, just very, very cold."

We had our summer clothes, and every hour we were climbing higher and higher, and the air got colder and colder.

Eventually we climbed to the top of the Pordoi pass. It was evening when we got there, and a most beautiful sunset turned our snow path into a metallic crimson. When the sun had set a cloud enveloped us in the mist. The hotel on the crest (which mercifully was not closed like most of them on account of the season being over) gave us a cheerful hospitality. I was frozen to the bone, and after two hot grogs, coffee and steaming soup I went to bed in my overcoat with a beer-bottle of hot water at my feet, and thereby saved myself from an early grave.

The next morning I started off on foot down the mountain-side so as to get warm before the day's motor run. Peter agreed to give me an hour's start.

I got a long way by slipping down from the top road to the lower, whereas Peter had to zig-zag for miles back and forth. There was snow and frost on the ground, but a bright sun and brilliant blue gentians. I think I appreciated the stillness (after the continual noise of Satanella's engine) as much as the beauty.

AN AUSTRIAN WAR CEMETERY ON THE SUMMIT OF PORDOÏ IN THE DOLOMITES.

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But everywhere there were signs of the horrible violent conflict that had taken place during those years of war. Everywhere there were little groups of graves, and high crucifixes with dying Christs beneath their sheltering roofs. These shrines, which were not relegated only to cemeteries, but faced one at every turn in the mountains, seemed to me to have been erected as a warning to idealists. A warning of what may happen to those who dare to preach poverty, equality. . . .

I forget if it was that day or the next that Satanella went on strike and a merciful Providence saved us from a violent accident. Peter knows what happened, and could explain it. I only know that the front wheel got paralysed, and we skidded off the road and hung over the edge. Something in the make-up of the machinery hitched onto the road and prevented us from going headlong over! It was a strange thing to happen, considering the way we had got through over the worst difficulties of our trip. However, I do not blame Satanella, she always seemed to me a human thing, full of temperament and tact. Doubtless she disliked the cold as I did, and felt that the Austrian Tyrol was nothing but an anti-climax after Russia! But if the Tyrol was an anti-climax, what would Switzerland be? That

evening, in the dusk, a motor-lorry from the next town came and picked us up. It picked up Satanella too, the first time that she had known such a humiliation. In a battered condition we were driven into shelter. It was then, after two days (I believe we were in Meran), waiting for Satanella's wounds to be repaired, that Peter made the great suggestion: "Wouldn't you be happier if you went back by train?"

The thought had already occurred to me, but I had cast it out as an unsporting thing. How could I suggest abandoning Peter to a lonely Swiss fate? But when the suggestion came from him, I revolved it seriously in my mind. I certainly was tired, and cold, and in a hurry to organise my return to the Bosphorus—the Bosphorus; that settled it! I saw that serenely lovely house by the water's edge, bathed in reflected evening light. . . . I took Peter's advice and caught a train. . . .

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